

“In The Name of the Holy Trinity”: Examining Credibility Under Anarchy Through 250 Years of Treaty-Making

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Abstract

Where does the binding force of international treaties come from? This article considers three centuries of international peace treaties to chart how signatories have sought to convince one another of the viability of their commitments. I show how one means of doing so was by invoking divine authority: treaty violations were punished by divine sanction in heaven and excommunication on earth. Anarchy, “the fundamental assumption of international politics,” is commonly defined as “the absence of a supreme power.” Yet an examination of peace treaties from the 1600s onwards suggests that for much of the post-Westphalian era, sovereigns would not have envisioned themselves as operating under anarchy. Rather, they strategically invoked divine authority to add credibility to their commitments. Signatories facing a high probability of war are seen relying more heavily on invocations of divine authority. Strikingly, treaties that invoke divine authority then show a greater conflict-abating effect. Using automated text analysis of two thousand peace, commerce, and navigation treaties spanning 250 years, I show how treaty performance was affected when signatories lost the ability to invoke the divine as a means of binding themselves. God appears to be statistically significant.

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1 Introduction

“The Ratification of the Treaty of Münster,” by Gerard ter Borch, may well be the most historically significant painting in international relations. It depicts the Spanish and the Dutch ratifying the 1648 Treaty of Münster, one of the two treaties making up the Peace of Westphalia, which in the words of its most cited commentator, Leo Gross, was that “majestic portal which leads from the old into the new world” (Gross, 1948, 28).¹

The “old world”, in this telling, was a heteronomous European system dominated by two poles of power: the Holy Roman Empire and the papacy.² As both the Empire and the Pope lost their sway, the “new world” that allegedly emerged from Westphalia was an international system made up of sovereign states, where religion was no longer at the center of international political affairs. Lacking any central authority to appeal to, anarchy was asserted anew, defining the international system as we know it today. Anarchy denotes neither chaos nor a lack of rules. Rather, as the most widely used undergraduate textbook on international relations puts it, “this—*the absence of a supreme power*—is what is meant by the anarchic environment of international politics” (Art and Jervis, 2005, 2).³

Yet a closer look at ter Borch’s painting is enough to throw some doubt on how this definition of anarchy might apply to the post-Westphalian world. Ter Borch, who had been specially commissioned to commemorate the event, was in the room during the ratification (he painted himself into the picture as one of the 77 attendees), making the painting an unusually reliable portrayal of the proceedings.⁴ Tellingly, the painting’s full title is “The swearing of the oath of ratification of the treaty of Münster in 1648”, and the moment it depicts is of both parties simultaneously swearing an oath to uphold the treaty before ratifying it.⁵ The Dutch representatives hold two fingers up in the traditional *Schwurhand* oath gesture, while two Spanish delegates place their hands on a bible, on which rests a large metal cross. To the right of the Spanish delegation is a Franciscan

¹For details of the painting, see the record at the National Gallery, <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/gerard-ter-borch-the-ratification-of-the-treaty-of-munster>.

²The “heteronomous” label, referring to the way pre-modern featured a variety of functional forms, comes from Ruggie (1993).

³Emphasis added. For a recent intellectual history of the concept of anarchy in the field of IR, see Schmidt (2016, 40): “it would be difficult to overstate the extent to which anarchy has become the single most discussed concept in the field of international relations”.

⁴The painting is believed to be the earliest such “live” depiction of a historical event by a noted artist brought in specially for the occasion (Schrijver, 1974). That a painting was specially commissioned in this way might be read as evidence of the awareness of the negotiators of the historical importance of the event.

⁵In one notable departure from reality, the two parties actually swore their oath one after the other.

priest. Overlooking the proceedings is a chandelier with a Virgin Mary and Child emitting golden rays on the assembled plenipotentiaries. And if one could peer further in and read the text of the treaty both parties are holding, one would see that its first line is the traditional *invocatio*: “In the Name of the Most Holy and Indivisible Trinity”. In other words, passing through the “majestic portal” into the modern era of international relations was performed through an oath to God, with all the accompanying accoutrements. As the remainder of this article argues, this striking fact is emblematic of a wider failure to appreciate the role of divine authority in post-Westphalian international relations. The implications could hardly be more profound.

To preview this article’s central claim, I argue that the invocation of divine authority was a pre-modern solution to the problem of international anarchy, and that it remained in use for some two hundred years following the Peace of Westphalia. Although we commonly refer to Westphalia as reifying Grotius’ mid-17th century vision for a system of law between states that would hold even in the absence of God,⁶ state rulers continued to behave as if God were in fact watching for another two centuries.⁷ As I argue in this article, they did so because it proved useful to cooperation.

The invocation of divine authority does not appear to be reducible to rote formulae, since we see a great deal of variation in its use. Some treaties, like the Treaty of Münster, were signed “in the name of the Holy Trinity”, invoked God as a witness to their commitments, and preemptively nullified any Papal dispensation of their treaty obligations—while other treaties concluded over the same period made no mention of divine authority whatsoever. Why was God sometimes invoked, and sometimes not? What might explain such variation in the design of international agreements?

The view of God as a credibility-enhancing device offers a possible solution to this empirical puzzle. If divine authority was a means of rendering promises more binding, we should see it invoked more frequently when the need for credibility was highest. Peace treaties should thus see more references to divine authority than commerce and navigation treaties, and peace treaties between more conflict-prone dyads should see more invocations of divine authority than agreements between less war-prone dyads. The next, more delicate question is whether this variation in institutional

⁶ “*etiamsi daremus... non esse Deum*”. Grotius has become the figurehead for the secularization of the relations between states, which is why I also focus on him below, but as is most often the case, the initial impetus begins before him, with scholars like de Soto and Vasquez, writing a century earlier, and finds its full consummation in the writings of scholars like de Vattel, writing a century later.

⁷Much scholarship has been devoted to whether the Grotian *esse deum* hypothesis was indicative of Grotius’ agnosticism and an attempt at the secularization of international law, or whether it was vested in a form of argumentation common among the Scholastics. For a useful review of this discussion, see Negro (1995).

design had any effect on behavior: if we believe that God was a credibility-enhancing device, did this actually translate into more binding promises? Specifically, were peace treaties that invoked God better at securing peace between their signatories?

To address these questions, I turn to a novel body of evidence: The world's largest repository of interstate treaties, Parry's Treaty Series, consisting of over 16,000 treaties covering all aspect of international relations from 1648 to 1918. I render these treaties machine-readable, so that the treaties can be evaluated, for the first time, as a single corpus. This amounts to the largest textual corpus of peace treaties, and commerce and navigation treaties, available anywhere. As such, this article makes the case for the use of text-as-data to examine questions at the junction of history and political science.

One limitation of Parry's Treaty Series is that it remains mostly restricted to intra-European treaties, which limits the number of treaties that transcend Christendom. Yet agreements between non-coreligionists are analytically valuable, since they constitute a hard test for my argument. To increase the representativeness of the evidence beyond Western Christendom, and to introduce non-coreligionist agreements, I thus complement this large series with a detailed examination of a set of recently discovered treaties between European powers and the Ottoman empire, as well as the Crimean Khans, spanning the 15th to the 18th century. As I demonstrate through an examination of these treaties between non-coreligionists and the negotiations surrounding them, all parties operated under the premise that the other side would be further tied to its commitments if these were made in the name of the relevant divine authority. They did not always understand the other party's belief system; but they nonetheless sought to exploit that belief system to increase the credibility of the other side's commitments.

The empirical findings, using both automated text analysis and qualitative evidence, appear to support these beliefs. First, the role of divine authority in treaty-making did not diminish within international relations following Westphalia—in fact, during the century following Westphalia, the frequency of invocations of divine authority in peace treaties (but not commerce and navigation treaties) *increased*. Secondly, the findings support the idea that invocations of divine authority were viewed as a means of increasing the credibility of inter-state promises: God was invoked more often when credibility was needed. Thirdly, and most strikingly, these invocations seem to have had an observable effect on prolonging peace. In other words, God appears to be statistically

significant.

Rulers in the “new world” that purportedly emerged from the Westphalian portal would have been astonished to hear they were acting in a system devoid of a “supreme authority”. Rather, they continued to operate within a social and political system that saw commitments made under invocations of divine authority as more credible. This is enough to throw into question the introductory statement that we make about international relations: a supreme power was in fact present, and it was turned to when needed. As I demonstrate, international anarchy in the meaning we have it today only truly came into being around 1866—the last time a European treaty was signed “in the name of the Holy Trinity.” By then, the discursive practices of public international law, and the beliefs they stood for, came to fully replace invocations of divine authority in the dealings between nations. States replaced one shared fiction by another: instead of a supreme heavenly authority, sovereigns agreed to be bound by a common set of rules to which they consented *ex ante*, in recognition of the ways such binding rules furthered their mutual interests and “general welfare”.⁸

The argument turns on the relation between the instrumental deployment of divine authority, and the non-instrumental subjugation to it. As I argue, the two were simultaneously present—as they would have to be for divine authority to have an effect on behavior. Signatories believed the other party would be bound by references to divine authority in the treaty they were signing, because they found *themselves* to be further bound by these invocations. These binds were part genuine faith in a divine order, and part leftover social structures that had emerged from a setting where religion was at the center of human affairs. In something approaching our contemporary notion of audience costs, these binds were also supported by the expectations of political audiences who continued to perform a wide range of religious rites in their daily lives. In sum, sovereigns understood that a shared belief in a supreme authority—even when that supreme authority was not the same for each party—both rendered their own promises more credible, and allowed them to believe in the promises of others. The function of God in post-Westphalian interstate relations was thus a product both of sincere belief, and a shared fiction retained to instrumental ends. The latter, moreover, depended on the former: strategic exercise was made possible by its non-instrumental origins.

⁸See Vattel 1758, 72.

Among the many implications of these findings, one is to qualify the common account of the High Medieval and Late Medieval Period which describes a constant battle for authority between popes and kings—between *autorictas* and *potestas*.⁹ The story I tell here adds a caveat to this classic view. To be sure, popes and kings both sought to further their power by encroaching on the other’s domain: kings claimed spiritual dominion, and the papacy sought political sway. But when dealing with other sovereigns, kings found divine authority and the papal institution which gave it temporal significance of instrumental value. When the papacy declined in power, they continued to invoke it in their dealings with one another. Just as interestingly, when popes began offering Catholic princes dispensations from their treaty commitments (to further their own political ends), sovereigns adapted by introducing provisions in their treaties that voided such dispensations *ex ante*. Yet, strikingly, they went on invoking the pope’s authority to guarantee their commitments.

A second implication concerns what eventually replaced invocations of divine authority: the emergence of a law of nations, which eventually became known, sometime in the 19th century, as public international law. The vacuum that resulted from the toppling of the twin poles of pan-European power left princes searching for means of enforcing their commitments to one another. As I show, this transition took over two centuries, and in the meantime, invocations of divine authority retained significance. But examining this transition lays bare the small miracle that had to occur for public international law to provide a solid enough scaffolding to build inter-state relations on. One conclusion is that the material underpinnings of 19th century public international law are as fantastical as oaths attaching one’s word to God’s name, once the pope and ecclesiastical courts had fallen away as enforcers of those oaths. In both cases, we are dealing with shared fictions around which expectations converge over time.

2 Divine Authority in International Relations

In his questioning of the effect of Westphalia on the treatment of sovereignty, Osiander (2001) persuasively shows that the myth of Westphalia could be chalked up to what he calls the “anti-Habsburg propaganda” of the 17th century, and the nation-state-oriented historiography of the 19th century. In much the same way, our secularized view of international relations (Philpott,

⁹See, for instance, Oakeshott (2011).

2009; Hurd, 2009) makes it is easy to overlook the way in which international relations have been premised on the invocation of divine authority for the greater part of its history.

Another disciplinary bias is more widely acknowledged. The convenience of dating the start of international relations between sovereign states to 1648 has left IR scholarship largely oblivious to what transpired prior to that point, as if the international system emerged *ex nihilo*. The premise in this article is that the social order which the two poles of European power, the Holy Roman Empire and the papacy, brought about during the Late Medieval Period continued to affect the expectations and behavior of sovereigns well after Westphalia. For this reason, it becomes relevant to look at how sovereigns approached the perennial problem of making their promises credible prior to 1648—promises over issues such as common borders, aggression, the treatment of prisoners of war, the safe passage of one another’s tradesmen, the tolerance of one another’s religious denominations, the rights of asylum and rules of extradition, or the treatment accorded one another’s traded goods. In what follows, I provide a brief overview of the means by which sovereigns sought to make promises to one another over time, and the outsized role that invocations of divine authority played in their attempts to garner credibility.

2.1 Where Does the Binding Force of Treaties Come From?

Hugo Grotius spent much of his treatise “On the Law of War and Peace,” first published in 1625 and commonly regarded as the foundational text that preconfigured a modern law of nations, trying to provide an answer to this question.¹⁰ In doing so, Grotius relied largely on Roman *jus gentium* and canon law.

According to both sources, treaties were understood as oaths, and oaths were made before God. On this point, Grotius turns repeatedly to Cicero, the Roman orator: “there can be no stronger tie, to the fulfillment of our word and promise, than an oath, which is a solemn appeal to the testimony of God.”¹¹ The Roman historian Titus Livy is cited to similar effect: “treaties are

¹⁰Grotius 1625. See note 6, *supra*, on how the convention of looking to Grotius as the “father of international law” glosses over the importance of scholars who both preceded and followed. It remains that “On the Law of War and Peace” was the first attempt at a comprehensive treatment of law nations, rather than some of its aspects in isolation.

¹¹In fact, Grotius treated oaths as having even greater force than in Cicero. So universal was their scope, and unbending their force, that Grotius denied Cicero’s point about the legitimacy of breaking oaths with the “common enemies of all,” like pirates and robbers. Thus even the promise of ransom fell under the divine force of oaths. This inflexibility seems to have been influenced by canon law on the matter. See Pelc (2016).

those contracts, which are made by the express authority of the sovereign power, and in which the people invoke the divine vengeance on their heads, if they violate their engagements.”¹²

Such passages are all the more striking since Grotius is usually associated with an attempt to get legal obligation *away* from divine authority. What is likely the most famous passage in all his writings attempts to sidestep God as the original source of legal obligation: “*ius* [law] consists in refraining from taking what belongs to another person, or in fulfilling some obligation to them. What I have just said would be relevant even if we were to suppose [...] that there is no God, or that human affairs are of no concern to him.”¹³

But despite this aim, Grotius believed that what ultimately led sovereigns to keep their promises to one another was, quite simply, “the wrath of heaven.”¹⁴ The enduring role of God as an enforcer of treaties made in his name remained unquestioned: “For he, to whom the oath is taken, is not the only person to be considered; but a solemn regard must be paid to God, in whose name the oath is taken, *and who possesses authority to enforce the obligation.*”¹⁵

The rediscovery of classical sources would have suffused the Renaissance with such views on the force of oaths, and on their discursive function with respect to treaties with foreign powers. Indeed, the ancient Greeks had premised any peaceful relations with foreigners on first concluding a treaty with them. Those treaties were physically held in temples, and an oath to their compliance was renewed every year (Ion, 1910). The fulfilment of the promises made in treaties was sacred, and the violation of those promises was met with divine wrath. The Iliad contains illustrative passages wishing such consequences on would-be treaty violators in colorful terms:

“Zeus, most glorious, most great, and ye other immortal gods, which host soever of the twain shall be first to work harm in defiance of the oaths, may their brains be thus poured forth upon the ground even as this wine, theirs and their children’s; and may their wives be made slaves to others.”¹⁶

Swearing an oath to some deity remained a precondition to the binding nature of agreements between sovereigns from Antiquity to the late Middle Ages (Preiser, 1995). As Ziegler (1995) puts

¹²De Jure Belli ac Pacis. Ch.15.

¹³Supra, note 6.

¹⁴“The soul is bound to greater caution by the addition of an oath. For it guards us against two things, most to be avoided, the reproach of friends, and the wrath of heaven.”

¹⁵Grotius 1625.

¹⁶Iliad 3.364

it, anticipating part of the argument I seek to make here: “So the gods invoked in international treaties had a double function from the very first: They were witnesses of the agreement confirmed by oaths, and they were judges and avengers guaranteeing the fulfilment of the promises and punishing the party violating its oath.”

Since treaties relied on oaths, and oaths were promises before God, religious authorities were appointed to decide on what constituted a violation, and what measures to take in response. They served as the terrestrial embodiment of the wrath of heaven.¹⁷ In fact, religious authorities remained as adjudicators and enforcers of treaties until at least the 16th century. Up to that point, “confirmation by religious oath served as the main constitutive act in the process of ratifying treaties,” and since breaching a religious oath was a violation of canon law, it fell under the jurisdiction of papal and ecclesiastical courts (Phillips, 2010, 67). During the Middle Ages, treaties ratified through oaths thus affirmed the Latin Church’s power and justified its involvement in political matters, a power that saw its apogee from 1200 to 1500, likely peaking sometime around the reign of Innocent III, in the 13th century.¹⁸ Religion had provided the shared understanding on which the European political order was built. It had created a *respublica Christiana*, where the Pope ruled over matters of war and peace; canon law was universally accepted as authoritative, reaching into the internal dealings of nations;¹⁹ and ecclesiastical courts wielded the equivalent of compulsory jurisdiction and a degree of enforcement power that some argue has never been equaled by any international tribunal since.²⁰

This enforcement power was real: the violation of treaties sworn as oaths constituted perjury, a mortal sin. In response, papal courts could, and frequently did, impose sentences of excommunication or interdict on rulers who had broken their oaths. These had a self-enforcing aspect that is rarely remarked upon, which should remind us of how political audiences could matter

¹⁷As Ziegler (1995, 240) cites from a tablet found at Olympia, dated from the 6th century BC: “This is the treaty (wratra) between the Anaitians and Metapians. There shall be friendship (philia) for fifty years. And the party which does not observe it shall be kept away from the altars by the *proxenoi* and *mantieis*. If they (the parties) violate the oath (horkos), the priests in Olympia shall decide it”.

¹⁸It was Innocent III who addressed the prelates of France in a decretal where he affirmed the Church’s prerogative over the enforcement of treaties between France and England. Novit ille, X.2, 1, 13, in: Ziegler 2004a.

¹⁹“The ground of this *auctoritas* was the pope’s position as guardian of the Christian church; and it was often used to instruct kings and emperors in their duties as Christian rulers and as protectors of the church. But in the course of time it went far beyond this, and became the right to instruct and to admonish rulers in all their conduct as rulers.” (Oakeshott, 2011).

²⁰On this point, see Ullmann (1970), in an article aptly titled “The Medieval Papal Court as an International Tribunal”.

even in pre-modern feudal societies: all people living in the territory of a prince hit with a sentence of interdict suddenly found themselves unable to celebrate any religious ritual, from Sunday mass to baptisms and weddings. All such ceremonies immediately lost validity. In this way, “the papal verdict could always rely on the support or at least the acquiescence of the (inarticulate) people at large” (Ullmann, 1970, 363). In fact, the very aim of sentences of interdict was “the deprivation of cultic life [that] would turn the inhabitants against their governors” (Trexler, 1974, 2). The threat of excommunication, although directed at a single individual, also had broad political consequences: it not only denied the affected individual all Church rites, like a Christian burial, but all subjects and minister’s of an excommunicated ruler were instantly absolved of obedience (Hertz, 1990). Although it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of these sanctions on average, there is a great deal of anecdotal evidence suggesting they were a potent political tool. Famously, the entire government of Venice was excommunicated by Pope Clement V in the 14th century, and a sentence of interdict was placed on its territory. “The effects [...] were devastating” (Trexler, 1974, 13): Apulia closed its ports to Venetian merchants; the mercenaries of Venice refused to follow orders. Trade and commerce suffered. Venice was eventually forced to “humbly approach” the Pope and concede to its demands.²¹ The point is that in a setting where social dealings were commonly punctuated and upheld by religious rites, rulers did not have to fear being hit by a bolt of lightning to nonetheless have every incentive to avoid breaking their oaths: their political authority depended on it.

Originally, the force of treaties had come from the oath itself, performed as an actual physical gesture. The taking of the oath took place during ceremonies that included practices like touching the Gospels (or the Koran, by Muslim rulers), and the kissing of crosses (or holy icons, by Christian Orthodox rulers).²² During this phase, treaties merely documented the oath—they had no constitutive force. Then, the treaties ceased being mere oath-documents, and took on legal consequences of their own. There is disagreement among historians over when confirmation by oath and written ratification became separate, and at what point the latter began taking over from the former in terms of its constitutive force.²³ But at some point, the shift undoubtedly took place:

²¹Ibid.

²²Mikhailova and Prestel 2011.

²³See, for example, Steiger (1995), who claims that in the Treaty of Crépy of 1544, the written ratification was the true constitutive act of the treaty, while the oath was an accessory, intended to guarantee the treaty under canon law; whereas Lesaffer (2004, 26) disagrees, and considers that the two were not easily distinguishable, and that ratifications continued to rely on oaths, which were no mere accessory, until late into the 17th century. The empirical analysis below would seem to validate the latter view.

signed ratifications became sufficient to render a treaty binding under international law.²⁴ This shift away from the gesture of the oath was a rehearsal of the gradual transition from invocations of divine authority to reliance on the practices of a law of nations. As I suggest, that transition took place at different times in different places, and it had an observable effect on behavior, which is the basis for the empirical analysis below.

The design of treaties even prior to the Peace of Westphalia demonstrates a high degree of awareness of the utility of these enforcement mechanisms for the credibility of promises made. In ways mimicking modern human rights treaties (“Why do states give us these whips to flagellate themselves with?”),²⁵ treaty signatories explicitly submitted themselves to ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and welcomed all punishment that might result from breaking the treaty. Sovereigns thus willingly inserted clauses demanding the excommunication by the pope of any would-be violator of the treaty, and a sentence of interdict against his kingdom and all other territories.²⁶ There was a generalized understanding that the existence of a neutral arbiter—papal courts, in particular, being the most “neutral and independent” of the ecclesiastical courts overseeing relations between European princes²⁷—benefited rulers attempting to make believable promises to one another.

2.2 Rulers Harnessing Papal Authority

One clue about rulers’ awareness of how references to divine authority could bolster their commitments can be gleaned from the intriguing dialogue between popes and princes that played out in peace treaties from the 14th to the 17th century. Specifically, sometime in the Late Middle Ages, popes began bending the interpretation and application of treaties to Church interests. This eager wielding of religious authority to political ends was likely a reaction to the rise of the Ottoman threat from the east, and then unsurprisingly peaked with the Reformation. As Nussbaum (1953) describes, treaties signed with princes “heretic, schismatic, or otherwise in some way separated

²⁴As Vattel, who would have been at the forefront of this shift, explained in his 1758 “Law of Nations,” “an oath does not constitute the obligation to keep a promise or a treaty: it only gives an additional strength to that obligation, by calling God to bear witness.” Vattel 1758, 390. In this telling, the oath was no longer constitutive; it was merely an additional guarantee.

²⁵Nigel Rodley, UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, cited in Simmons (2009, 57).

²⁶For instance, the 1492 Peace Treaty of Etaples between France and England featured just such a clause, inviting both excommunication and a sentence of interdict against King Henry VII of England and King Charles VIII of France (Ziegler, 2004a).

²⁷Treaties often explicitly assigned jurisdiction over the provisions contained in the treaty to papal courts, as opposed to ecclesiastical courts like the episcopal courts (Lesaffer, 2004, 24).

from the Roman Church” could suddenly be made void.²⁸

The pope was empowered to offer dispensations that freed princes from their obligations, precisely because these obligations had been taken on through an oath. The same Church that imbued the promises of sovereigns to one another could also take away from the force of those promises, and it began doing so when it suited its interests: from then on, both parties knew that their commitments were only as strong as the Pope’s inclination to offer a dispensation. Some popes used these powers of dispensation liberally; the credibility of treaty commitments suffered. Papal authority over law began to do damage to its compliance pull. Vattel, writing in the mid-18th century, condemned this abuse of power in the strongest terms: “Several popes have [...] carried their daring audacity so far as to release a contracting power from his engagements, and to absolve him from the oaths by which he had confirmed them.”²⁹ Vattel went on to detail the damage that such dispensations did to the prospect of cooperation between princes.³⁰

What is relevant to the argument is how treaties then evolved in response to this development. In a remarkable adaptation, princes began inserting clauses into treaties pleading pontiffs never to offer them dispensations, and pledging themselves neither to apply for these, nor to use them if ever a dispensation were offered. Consider the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494, where Spain and Portugal cemented their word by means of an oath: “they swore before God and the Blessed Mary and upon the sign of the Cross, on which they placed their right hands, and upon the words of the Holy Gospels” to “keep, observe, and fulfill all the aforesaid and each part and parcel of it, really and effectively, renouncing all fraud, evasion, deceit, falsehood, and pretense.”³¹ But by the *same oath*, the parties also “swore not to seek absolution or release from [the treaty provisions] from our most Holy Father.” And even if that dispensation were given to them without their asking, the signatories swore that they “will not make use of it.”³²

Strikingly, despite acknowledging the wrinkle of papal dispensations, and attempting to shield the agreement from it, the treaty went on in the same breath to latch commitments onto the Pope’s authority and enforcement power: “[the parties] entreat our most Holy Father that his

²⁸In particular, some popes argued that obligations towards non-Catholics could be disregarded.

²⁹Vattel 1758.

³⁰“Who does not see, that these daring acts of the popes, which were formerly very frequent, were violations of the law of nations, and directly tended to destroy all the bands that could unite mankind” Vattel 1758, 390.

³¹Treaty of Trodesillas (1494).

³²The Avalon Project : Treaty Between Spain and Portugal concluded at Tordesillas; June 7, 1494.

Holiness be pleased to confirm and approve this said agreement [...] and that he lay his censures upon those who shall violate or oppose it at any time whatsoever.” In other words, even once the fickleness of the Pope was known, sovereigns did not cease invoking his authority to bind their word. To wit, a half-century later, the Treaty of Zaragoza, a treaty between the same two powers (and which sought to divide the entire known world between them), once again empowered the Pope to excommunicate any would-be violator of the treaty. Safeguards against dispensations were thus a common adaptation to “unwanted” flexibility offered by the enforcer of sovereigns’ commitments. The Treaty of Münster itself, the ratification of which is portrayed in Ter Borch’s painting, contained such a clause: “That it never shall be alledg’d, allow’d, or admitted, that any [...] Ecclesiastical Decrees, Dispensations, Absolutions, or any other Exceptions, under what pretence or colour they can be invented; shall take place against this Convention.”³³

What should we take away from this? Papal authority over treaties and sovereigns’ internal matters was not wholly unwanted by princes: it served a key purpose—so much so, that when it was loosened, sovereigns themselves sought to close the resulting loophole. They were aware of the utility of an enforcement body with power to castigate them, and sought to maintain that power. This adaptation in treaty design demonstrates a hand-tying reflex that is more commonly associated with modern states: the realization that one enters into international agreements not in spite of their binding nature, but *because* of it.

This adaptation to papal dispensation mimics the broader change that unfolded post-Westphalia, which I turn to next. Even as they fought the Pope’s influence, princes of the 15th and 16th century realized full well the benefits they derived from the Church’s authority.³⁴ The binding nature of their promises to one another relied on it. When the Church’s influence waned, they sought to preserve this useful function.³⁵ The result was a coordinated effort to retain the conventions and expectations that the Church had imposed—even (or especially) once these common expectations lost their material underpinning. While princes distanced themselves from Church interests in a number of other ways (Walter, 2007), shared conventions in treaty-making were retained because they proved useful for cooperation.

³³Treaty of Westphalia. Peace Treaty between the Holy Roman Emperor and the King of France and their respective Allies. Article CXXI.

³⁴As Trexler (1974, 17) puts it, “whatever the discomforts associated with ecclesiastical censure, they obviously formed a significant part of the total coercive authority of [political] realms.”

³⁵On this waning influence, see Oakeshott (2011).

2.3 Continuity in Treaty Design in the Face of Change

The real blow to the political might of the Western Church came not at Westphalia—though the pope did lash out against its outcome—but with the Reformation a century earlier. In the middle of the 16th century, religion, which had been the basis of a shared European order for nearly a millennium, became the main source of strife within it (Nexon, 2009). The remarkable thing is this: the Reformation, the attendant rejection of ecclesiastical courts by much of the Northern European powers, and the blood-soaked wars of religion, did not do away with the practice of reaching treaties through oaths and the invocation of divine authority—even between warring religious denominations. This fact has been remarked upon as “surprising” and “striking” by historians,³⁶ who have noted that “until deep in the seventeenth century, almost all important political treaties were confirmed by oath” (Lesaffer, 2004, 26).

Striking through it is, such continuity is consistent with current theory about institutional change. Much has been made by economists of the force of path dependence,³⁷ and by legal scholars of the “stickiness” of legal text.³⁸ While one should be careful when making claims about the nature of legal provisions across 500 years, it is plausibly a feature of all formal agreements that continuity is valued: reprising the same formulae, even when their historical antecedents have lost their meaning, is a means of building on past interaction, of inscribing a current round into a cycle of cooperation, and of taking advantage of focal points. The strong form of this claim is that if oaths were a signal of credibility, either because they selected for meaningful commitments, or because they had an inherent binding effect of their own, then that signal would remain meaningful past the weakening of its enforcement mechanisms. These were not mere rhetorical devices: over four hundred years of treaties sworn through oaths enjoying material enforcement, expectations would have converged over what made a promise binding and believable. Little by little, what had required the scaffolding of material penalty would begin to float on its own. In the vacuum left by the loss of the twin poles of pan-European medieval power, such a shared fiction about the credibility of promises that invoked divine authority would prove especially useful.

³⁶“The custom to have treaties confirmed by oath surprisingly did not end with the Reformation. Up to the end of the seventeenth century, treaties were still sworn upon, even when rulers from different Christian churches were involved.” (Lesaffer, 2004, 24). Similarly, the concept of *respublica Christiana* proved a strikingly persistent one, and treaties until the end of the 18th century continue to refer to it (Steiger, 2001, 184).

³⁷See North (1990) onwards.

³⁸Most recently, see Gulati and Scott (2016) on how such stickiness may lead to continuity even when it appears suboptimal.

Similarly, allusions to Christendom itself continued past the Reformation and wars of religion, another continuity that has been remarked upon by historians as surprising: “It is, however, striking that the references to the internal peace within the Christian republic [...] did not disappear from the preambles of peace treaties during the period of the wars of religion.” More generally, even when the practice of ratifications through oaths disappeared as a distinct element of treaties at the end of the 17th century, references to divine authority remained in other guises. By 1866, when the Emperor of Austria and the King of Prussia ratified a peace treaty in Prague, where they also committed to each building a section of railway to their common border to restore communications, the treaty still opened with the traditional *invocatio*, “In the name of the Most Holy and Indivisible Trinity.” These opening invocations remained frequent in the New World throughout the 19th century, between signatories like Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, and Brazil.

Interestingly, even the eventual passage from ecclesiastically-enforced canon law in a *respublica Christiana* to a modern law of nations was smoothed by constant references to the “sanctity” of these new principles, and how they transcended human affairs: as Vattel put it in the latter half of the 18th century, “The faith of treaties [...] is therefore to be held sacred and inviolable between the nations of the earth, whose safety and repose it secures” (Vattel, 1758, 387). Such references to the “sacred duty” of nations to uphold treaties were widespread over this period (Lesaffer, 2010).

I stress these instances of unexpected continuity because this selective retention of chosen aspects of treaty-making past the disappearance of their material underpinnings is a key premise of my argument: while many aspects of the relations between European powers changed as a result of the Reformation, the decline in power of the Church, and the end to religious wars reached under the Peace of Westphalia, other aspects were selectively retained—and for good reason: because they proved useful to solving enduring challenges of cooperation.

The resulting narrative echoes scholars like Philpott, who claim that “even if modern international relations was itself a secularizing authority structure, it was incubated in a period in which politics was driven mainly by religious conflict.” The secularism of IR as a discipline may lead us to underestimate the role of religion. The work that does ascribe it a significant role usually emphasizes religious *conflict* as the setting out of which sprang the international system. In part, this harkens back to the Peace of Westphalia as the foundational moment, since it represents the culmination of the wars of religion. And while it is undoubtedly true that religious conflict played

an important role in the birth of international relations, this ignores the way in which religion was also instrumentally deployed by non-religious authorities to secure political goals. Measuring the extent of this instrumental deployment is the challenge I turn to next.

3 An Empirical Examination of International Treaties

I have sought to show the extent to which invocations of divine authority found in earlier treaties remained far into the post-Westphalian period. The question is, did these invocations matter, or were they instead mere conventions, followed out of blind habit, amounting to rote usage?

How might we know? This question has not been asked of invocations of divine authority between states in the wake of Westphalia. But political scientists *have* long asked an analogous question of modern institutional arrangements: do these international institutions matter, or are they instead mere “scraps of paper”, epiphenomenal to states’ interests and power relations?³⁹

Two approaches have emerged in response. The first looks to the design of the agreements themselves; the second looks to behavior. In the first case, the premise is that if treaty designers expend considerable effort negotiating over the shape and content of agreements, if they reject some forms and accept others—and if as a result, the design of these agreements varies systematically according to context and purpose—then it must be that the political actors themselves, at least, believe the institutions to matter.

The second approach look at subsequent behavior, by asking: to what extent do international agreements lead states to behave differently than they otherwise would have? Do human rights agreements reduce governments’ reliance on torture and repression? Do trade agreements increase trade flows? Do bilateral investment treaties increase investment flows? Do cease-fire agreements prevent returns to violence?⁴⁰ In a testament to the difficulty of the empirical exercise involved, in none of these issue-areas have we reached a consensus view on whether institutions exert an average effect on behavior.

Increasingly, these two approaches have melded into one. Scholars have recognized that

³⁹The phrase has its origin in the German Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg describing the treaty guaranteeing Belgian neutrality as a “scrap of paper”. What often goes unmentioned, in a way that is relevant to the question asked here, is that the phrase came from an exchange with the ambassador from Great Britain, which had just gone to war with Germany over that very scrap of paper. The scrap was thus not “mere,” but mighty. https://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/1914_Documents.

⁴⁰See, respectively, (Simmons and Danner, 2010; Tomz, Goldstein and Rivers, 2007; Yackee, 2008; Fortna, 2003).

while some agreements do seem to matter for outcomes, others may not, and that the difference may be a matter of design. The resulting question becomes, what design features explain the success of agreements? For example, looking to cease-fire agreements, Fortna (2003) finds that more specific provisions, and the creation of independent commissions to adjudicate misunderstandings are both associated with higher odds of peace.

Yet this theoretical insight linking design and success only exacerbates the analytical challenge. If some features of design are better than others, then the natural question is, why don't all agreements espouse these successful features? Since the answer may have to do with the *ex ante* likelihood of the agreement successfully curbing state behavior (the appointment of an independent commission in a cease-fire agreement might be a sign of stronger intent towards peace), the problem of endogeneity only grows more acute. I try to address this challenge through a combination of approaches: testing the effect of godliness in treaties under different circumstances; employing an instrumental variable approach; and turning to qualitative evidence of rulers' own beliefs.

3.1 Research Design

I begin by examining whether the frequency of invocations of divine authority varies systematically, in the ways we would expect if the signatories of these treaties expected them to matter. Then I attempt to measure whether these invocations had an actual effect on the odds of conflict. Finally, I examine the historical record for a subset of treaties—between European and Muslim powers, which may constitute an especially hard test for the argument—to search for qualitative evidence of the underlying mechanism.

First, if invocations of divine authority during the post-Westphalian period remained a means of increasing the credibility of promises, we should expect them to be deployed when the stakes are especially high, and credibility is especially needed. The first means of proxying for the value of credible promises is by issue-area: no question presents higher stakes than war. By contrast, while commerce also relies on credible commitments by trading partners, it presents less of a zero-sum aspect than e.g. conflicts between states over territory. It is less afflicted by the implications of anarchy. Commerce and navigation treaties are more akin to coordination devices.

One might similarly expect variation *among* different peace treaties: as the risk of conflict grew in a dyad, the value of credible promises in peace treaties would increase in tandem. A shared

history of war, suggesting the risk of more conflict, should thus be associated with greater reliance on invocations of divine authority. This reasoning leads to the following first-stage expectations:

H1a. *Peace treaties, as a category, should be more likely to include invocations of divine authority than commerce and navigation treaties.*

H1b. *Peace treaties between more war-prone dyads with a history of conflict should be more likely to include invocations of divine authority.*

The implicit assumption is that invocations of divine authority are not “free”; otherwise, we should expect rulers to invoke God at any opportunity. But what would have made invocations of divine authority effective would also restrict them to specific settings. Stated otherwise, over-invoking divine authority would have risked eroding its signalling value. The power of ceremony lies at least in part in its being circumscribed. In the same way, people do not swear on their ancestors’ graves when promising to pay for coffee next time around: to do so would be uncouth, since the stakes are not sufficiently high to justify it. Rulers would have had an analogous incentive to reserve invocations of divine authority for settings that demanded it, when credibility proved most valuable.

In a second step, I attempt a more delicate exercise: I ask whether these invocations of divine authority had any effect on state behavior. The mechanism through which treaty rhetoric would affect behavior could be one of two broad types. First, treaties that bound sovereigns’ promises through invocations of divine authority might make those sovereigns less likely to go back on their commitments, because of higher perceived costs. Owing either to their personal faith, or that of their political audience, leaders may have been more reticent to violate commitments that still featured the trappings of an oath. In this way, they may have insisted on the other side binding their word to God as a condition for concluding the agreement—a type of screening device. Below, in Section 4, I show how such instances can even be seen in Christian-Muslim treaties.

Alternatively, rulers may have reserved the rhetoric associated for hundreds of years with the binding nature of treaties for those commitments they truly wished to be bound to, in what would amount to a selection process. The presence of these invocations would have distinguished credible commitments from less credible ones. In this view, rulers would have trudged out the

formulations invoking divine authority when they “meant it,” that is, when they were confident they could abide by the promises made.

In both cases, invocations to divine authority are not only textual indicators, but proxies for a type of treaty: these treaties would have been more likely to be ratified in cathedrals, or with clergy in the room. Those ratifications would have been accompanied by the ringing of church bells, and the public singing of the *Te Deum*.⁴¹ Looking at the treaty text, in the way I describe below, is a means of capturing these broader features.

Of course, history is littered with promises made and broken. Similarly, most modern cease-fire agreements quickly break down. The question is, did the treaties that invoked references to divine authority prove more effective than those that did not, especially once the authority of popes and ecclesiastical authorities had waned? Is there a detectable effect on average? Relying on the most comprehensive data of conflict over this period,⁴² I test which treaties appear to be most effective at extending peace. The resulting expectation can be formulated as:

H2. *Treaties that invoked divine authority more frequently should be associated with more lasting peace, all else equal.*

Yet all may not be equal. There may even be good reason to expect a *negative* association between invocations of divine authority and subsequent peace. As Nussbaum (1954) put it, the “multiplication of solemnities in treaty-making is not a propitious symptom.” In other words, the more complex the rituals that parties feel they have to engage in to render their promises credible, the greater the cooperation challenge they are likely to be facing. Thus, if divine authority is invoked when it is most needed, then it may be a good proxy for a high likelihood of war. If this selection effect swamps the direct effect of invocations on bindingness the commitments, a spurious relationship results.

I attempt to deal with this issue of endogeneity, and the underlying identification challenge, through an instrumental variable approach, and further qualitative evidence. A valid instrument would be correlated with variation in the invocation of divine authority, without being directly related to the subsequent odds of peace. To this purpose, I rely on the geographic distance of the treaty parties to the Vatican.

⁴¹These accompanied, for instance, the ratification of the Peace of Westphalia at Münster.

⁴²I am grateful to Benzell and Cooke for sharing these data. See Benzell and Cooke (2018).

The intuition behind the instrument, which performs well in diagnostics, is that the Vatican was the source of enforcement power of treaties that relied on oaths during the entire Medieval period. Yet it was often noted that its reach decreased with distance. It is no coincidence that Protestantism took root mostly in northern Europe. After all, the references to divine authority post-Westphalia were the continuation of a social system where popes wielded political power, which was vested in canon law, and enforced through delegation to ecclesiastical courts.

Historical evidence suggests that geographic distance made it harder for Popes to impose their will on faraway lands. Referring to Pope Innocent III, Moore (1962, 79) thus observes, “the ordinary exercise of the papal power [...] was often attenuated by the distance between the pope and the matters handled, and hence, was not always so effective”. These territories would have been less likely to view papal power as decisive, and thus less likely to continue invoking divine authority in treaties during the post-Westphalian period.

In sum, theory offers support for an association between distance to the Vatican and lower invocations of divine authority in treaties. Conversely, it is unlikely that the distance of one’s capital to the Vatican, would, by itself, would make these lands more war prone.

Yet given the unavoidable limitations of causal inference across a 250-year span, in the third part of the analysis, I supplement the quantitative findings with qualitative evidence. I use this opportunity to focus on an additional set of treaties, not included in Parry’s Consolidated Series, and not covered by Benzell and Cooke’s conflict data, covering Christian-Muslim relations. I use the historical record surrounding these treaties to test the same expectations as in the quantitative tests, focusing on the signatories’ own beliefs, asking (i) whether signatories knowingly deployed invocations to God in treaties in a systematic way, and (ii) whether they believed that these invocations would render their mutual commitments more binding.

3.2 Measuring Invocations of Divine Authority

The main analysis relies on a new dataset drawing from the largest available repository of international treaties, Parry’s Consolidated Treaty Series (1976), which counts some 16,192 treaties.⁴³

The analysis focuses on the content of the 925 peace treaties and 1431 commerce and navigation

⁴³See <https://opil.ouplaw.com/search>. To offer a sense of how infrequent such attempts at cataloguing the Western world’s treaties, the prior comparative effort to Parry’s Series was Dumont’s “Corps Universel Diplomatique du Droit des Gens”, in 1726. Parry’s relies on Dumont’s series for the pre-1726 treaties.

treaties contained in the treaty series, but I account for all the other treaties as controls of the level of overall diplomatic interaction between dyads.⁴⁴ This is not the first attempt at using a large series of treaties as a single corpus,⁴⁵ but it is the first to offer an overall sense of the evolution of treaty-making among European powers across 250 years using quantitative methods.

To offer a first sense of these data, Figure 1 illustrates the frequency of peace treaties and commerce and navigation treaties over time. It shows how the frequency of peace treaties remains steady during the entire period, whereas that of commerce and navigation treaties (the predecessors of modern trade agreements), increases markedly post-1820, reaching numbers far exceeding the rate of peace treaty signing.

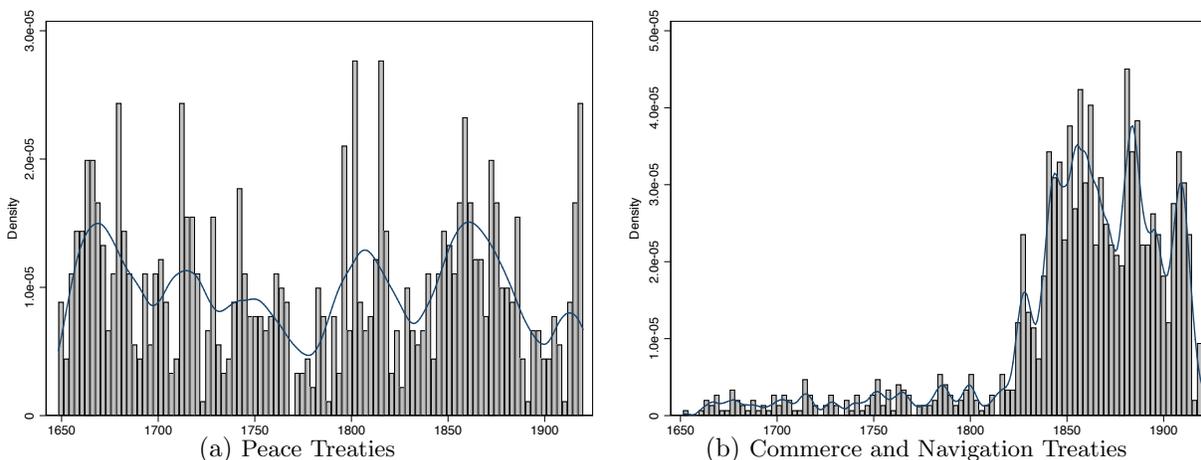


Figure 1: International Treaties by Type, 1648-1918

The digitized series only has images of the texts. I use optical character recognition (OCR) tools to make these machine-readable.⁴⁶ Parry’s Consolidated Treaty Series represents a considerable OCR challenge, since the treaties are often not available in English, and are transcribed in nearly a dozen different languages, and in as many fonts. The optical resolution of the texts sometimes leaves to be desired. Overall, the OCR accuracy hovers around 89% on average, with earlier treaties featuring lower accuracy (owing mostly to the more esoteric fonts found in Dumont’s 1726 Series), and later texts faring better. Whenever possible, I correct for systematic mistakes in

⁴⁴It is a telling reflection of the longstanding convention that dates the start of international relations at 1648 that this is also the start of the most comprehensive treaty series we have today. The Westphalia treaties are the earliest treaties in the data.

⁴⁵Spirling (2012), for instance, uses just under 600 US treaties with Native Americans to show that Congress’ takeover of treaty-making had little effect on agreement outcomes.

⁴⁶I use ABBYY’s FineReader package, which allows for training of specific characters, and has the widest coverage of languages among available alternatives.

OCR results within the analysis.⁴⁷

I then code each treaty for the frequency of invocations of divine authority. To this purpose, I manually coded a “God dictionary,” by reading through a subset of treaties, which contains all words referencing divine authority, such as God, amen, almighty, Trinity, Divine, sacred (see the Appendix for a full list). To ensure that these are not picking up irrelevant terms, I subtract terms or phrases that include divine-related terms, but do not denote an invocation of divine authority. These are rote formulae, proper names, or official titles. “Holy Roman Empire” is an obvious example.⁴⁸

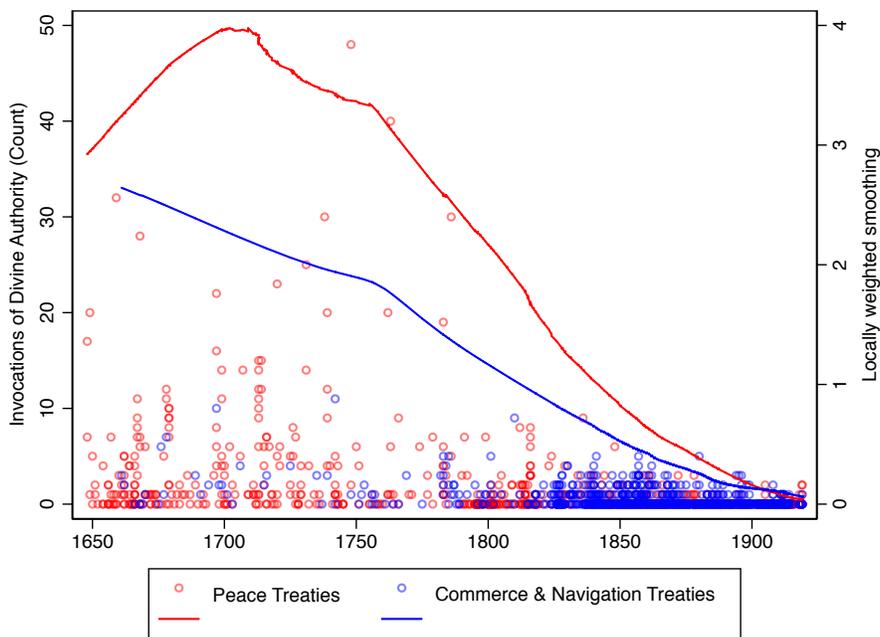


Figure 2: Invocations of Divine Authority in Peace vs. Commerce & Navigation Treaties

In Figure 2, I compare the frequency of invocation of divine authority in peace treaties vs. commerce and navigation treaties. If signatories are using divine authority instrumentally, they should invoke it with greater frequency in peace agreements than in commerce and navigation treaties. God should be deployed when credibility is most needed, and hardest to obtain. This is exactly what we see: invocations of divine authority are lower for commerce and navigation treaties

⁴⁷The most difficult character recognition challenge turns out to be the “*s/f*” problem: historical fonts render these practically indistinguishable, even after considerable training of the OCR algorithm. As a result, when searching for word occurrences, I search for all possible misspellings, counting occurrences of both e.g. “sacred” and “faced”.

⁴⁸In the English, I thus subtract from the overall God dictionary count phrases such as: Holy Roman, Sacred Roman, Sacred Imperial, Christian majesty, Christian majesty, Christian king, Christian powers.

than for peace treaties. The difference is also highly statistically significant in a regression setting.

Just as importantly, Figure 2 shows that for over a century following the Peace of Westphalia, far from falling off as a result of a secularization of international relations, the frequency of invocations of divine authority in peace treaties actually *increased*. A drop-off in references to God in treaties is only noticeable around 1770, when it falls to the same level as under Westphalia. The last takeaway from Figure 2 is that throughout the post-Westphalian period, we see considerable variation in the frequency of these invocations. It is this variation that interests us.

3.3 Findings (i): Do Invocations of Divine Authority Vary Systematically?

Peace treaties thus appear to feature significantly more invocations of divine authority than commerce and navigation treaties. But we can go further, and ask, are peace treaties between more conflict-prone dyads also more likely to invoke God?

The dependent variable is thus the number of invocations of divine authority, which I measure in two ways: (i) looking at all terms in the God dictionary, and (ii) looking only at mentions of the word “God” itself, since these leave the least room for ambiguity.

I proxy for the likelihood of conflict in a number of ways. The most likely predictor of war is its past occurrence. I thus code a count variable that keeps a running tally of the number of war years in the dyad under observation, until the year under observation. The conflict data come from Benzell and Cooke (2018).⁴⁹ It is also likely that states engaged in other concurrent conflicts would be especially eager to make believable promises: these may be treaties of peace and alliance. Geographic proximity could also be positively correlated with conflict, as might be any shared body of water, or common resource. I thus include the logged distance between the signatories’ capitals, and an indicator for the presence of a shared body of water between the signatories. I run an OLS regression, and cluster robust standard errors on the dyad. The results are shown in Table 1.

Overall, invocations of divine authority appear to vary systematically, responding to heightened odds of war. The number of years of war in the dyad over the past decade is strongly related to the presence of divine invocations throughout the estimations. Similarly, the greater number of other wars waged by the signatories, the more God is invoked in peace treaties between them.

⁴⁹Benzell and Cooke rely on the standard meaning of war from Wright (1942), defined as “the legal condition which equally permits two or more hostile groups to carry on a conflict by armed force.”

Table 1: Variation in Invocations of Divine Authority in Peace Treaties

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Divine Invocations	“God” Count	Divine Invocations	“God” Count
Years of War in Dyad in Last Decade	0.0757*** (0.0195)	0.0964*** (0.0282)	0.0597** (0.0248)	0.0860*** (0.0330)
Other Wars Waged by Signatories	0.0704** (0.0344)	0.0745 (0.0525)	0.0848** (0.0329)	0.0941* (0.0539)
Geographic Distance (log)	0.0154 (0.0880)	-0.1321 (0.1200)		
Shared Sea	-0.1080 (0.2198)	0.0950 (0.3112)		
Blood Relations in Dyad			-1.9229*** (0.5266)	-2.1230*** (0.6357)
Cubic Time Splines	Y	Y	Y	Y
Dyad Fixed Effects			Y	Y
Observations	754	754	479	479

Robust standard errors, clustered on dyad, in parentheses.

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Geographic proximity and the presence of shared bodies of water do not appear to have a consistent effect. This may be a reflection of the geography of empire, where the large size of state entities like the Habsburg empire would dampen the importance of distance or shared borders for conflict. I include cubic splines throughout, to account for time.

The results remain when adding dyad fixed effects, in Columns 3 and 4. There, I remove time-unvarying geographic variables, but add another: an indicator of the blood relations within the dyad, which covers most, though not all of the sample. This variable, taken from Benzell and Cooke (2018), is calculated as the inverse of the number of steps separating the two signatory in a family tree, bounded between zero and one. If the signatories are not related in any way, the variable is zero (the inverse of infinity), and then grows progressively to denote closer family ties, with one representing a direct tie (as between siblings or parents). The blood distance between signatories is consistently negatively related to invocations of God. In other words, the closer two signatories are to one another through blood ties. In this way, blood ties and divine invocations appear to be substitutes, which aligns with the theory, insofar as family relations and invocations of divine authority may both be sources of credibility.

Of course, one can only assess the invocations of divine authority in existing treaties; one cannot observe the presence of God in treaties that were never signed. But this makes the analysis prone to potential selection bias: perhaps the same factors that make countries more likely to sign peace agreements also make them more likely to invoke God. To disentangle these, I run a

Table 2: Variation in Invocations of Divine Authority: Selection Model

	(1)	(2)
	Divine Invocations	“God” Count
Outcome Stage		
Years of War in Dyad in Last Decade	0.316*** (0.116)	0.178** (0.074)
Other Wars Waged by Signatories	0.075 (0.123)	0.020 (0.067)
Shared Sea	-0.102 (0.172)	0.069 (0.134)
Geographic Distance (log)	0.013 (0.181)	-0.076 (0.098)
Observations	640	640
Selection Stage: Peace Treaty Signed		
Commerce and Navigation Treaties to Date	0.041*** (0.004)	0.041*** (0.004)
Years of War in Dyad in Last Decade	0.113*** (0.010)	0.113*** (0.010)
Other Wars Waged by Signatories	0.035*** (0.008)	0.035*** (0.008)
Shared Sea	0.365*** (0.067)	0.365*** (0.067)
Geographic Distance (log)	-0.074 (0.045)	-0.074 (0.045)
Observations	113552	113552
Cubic splines in both stages	Y	Y

Robust standard errors, clustered on dyad, in parentheses.

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

two-stage Heckman selection model, where the first stage estimates the odds of signing a treaty in the first place, and the second stage corrects for those odds when estimating the presence of divine invocations. The unit of analysis is now the dyad-year, rather than the treaty. For those years that saw more than one treaty signed (a not infrequent occurrence), I take the average of the relevant variables for all treaties in that year. The first stage is identified by including a count of the cumulative number of commerce and navigation treaties signed by the dyad up to the year of observation. The intuition is that this proxies for the intensity of diplomatic contact between dyads, in ways that should correlate with the odds of reaching a peace agreement, but it should have no direct effect on the number of divine invocations in such a peace agreement. Once again, I include cubic time splines in both stages of the estimation, and cluster robust standard errors on the dyad.

The results are show in Table 2. Looking at the first stage, the number of Commerce and Navigation treaties signed is highly related to the signature of peace treaties. And as might be

expected, both a history of conflict in the dyad, and ongoing other conflicts increase the odds of signing a peace treaty. Dyads that are closer together, and that share a body of water, are more likely to sign a peace treaty, though the latter effect is imprecisely estimated. The second stage results are most relevant: here, we see a highly similar pattern to Table 1, whereby a history of war increases the reliance on divine invocations. Other ongoing conflicts are also positively related, though not statistically significant. Even correcting for potential selection bias, then, we see a consistent effect.

In sum, these findings, in both a single-stage and two-stage estimation, are suggestive evidence of the strategic invocation of divine authority based, which appears related to the cooperation challenge signatories were faced with. If invocations of God were a mere convention, then we should expect them to appear uniformly in all treaties, or else to be included at the whim of the signatories, without any relation to external circumstances. Instead, what we see is that when sovereigns most needed to make credible commitments to one another, they did so in part by hooking their commitments to a “supreme authority”.

3.4 Findings (ii): Were Invocations of Divine Authority Effective?

Having shown that peace treaties in the post-Westphalian era saw greater reliance on divine authority when it was most needed, the next logical question is whether this had any of its intended effect. In other words, did God matter?

Before asking how invocations of divine authority qualified the impact of treaties, a prior question is whether peace treaties mattered in the first place. A first take on this question can be shown descriptively. Figure 3 shows the average incidence of dyadic conflict in the 25 years before and after every peace treaty signature in the sample. It divides the sample into two periods: from 1650 to 1750, and from 1750 to 1850. The demarcation between these two periods falls roughly at the Seven Years’ War, which Churchill called “the First World War”.⁵⁰ It is a point that scholars of global history associate with a number of shifts in military technology and universal conscription.⁵¹ Figure 3 offers two takeaways. First, in both periods, peace treaties do coincide with a decrease in the incidence of war. And secondly, the function of peace treaties appears to change between the

⁵⁰Churchill (1957), cited in Baugh and Baugh (2014).

⁵¹While the Seven Years’ War is often dated as starting in 1754, others see its origin back in the 1740s, with Prussia’s seizure of Silesia from Austria. 1750 thus serves as a willful approximation.

two periods: whereas in the earlier period, peace treaties were most often (in 85% of cases) signed in a time of peace, nearly half of the peace treaties in the second period were signed as conclusions to wars. This shift is worth keeping in mind as we move to the analysis, since it underscores the importance of assessing the effectiveness of treaties given the state of dyadic relations preceding the treaty.

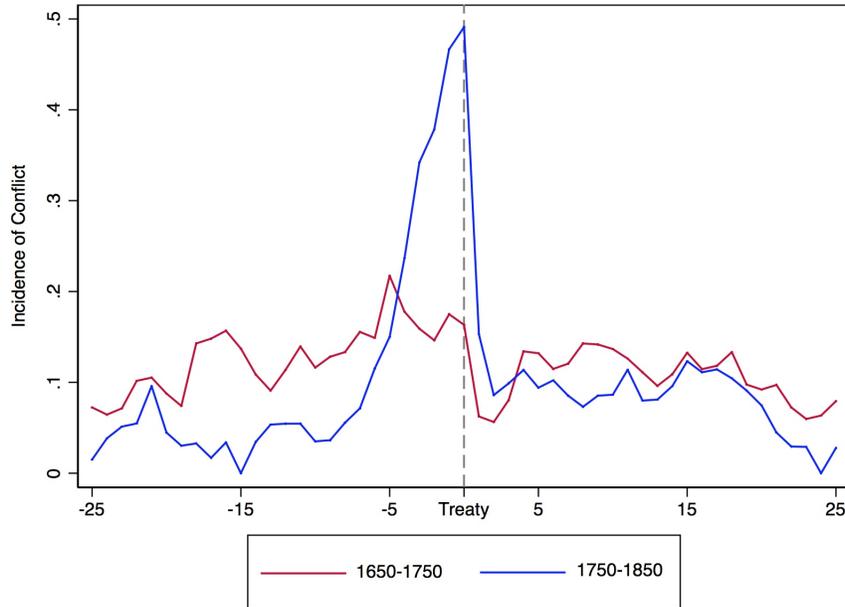


Figure 3: Average Incidence of War, Before/After Peace Treaties, by Time Period

I thus code the occurrence of treaties in the year that they are brought into force. Then, to measure their effect on behavior, I weight them through a 10-year linear decay function, as shown in Table 3. This is consistent with intuition and follows common practice in the literature. As e.g. Mattes and Vonnahme (2010) put it in the context of nonaggression alliances, “we expect that the conflict-reducing effect of nonaggression pacts may decline over time”. Mattes and Vonnahme also choose a ten-year window. Varying this window to 5 and 20 years leads to qualitatively similar findings. The resulting estimation, which relies on an interaction effect, is of the form:

$$Y_{it} = \beta_1 \text{Treaty}_{it} + \beta_2 \text{Godliness}_{it} + \beta_3 (\text{Treaty} \times \text{Godliness})_{it} + \Theta_4 X_{it} + \alpha_i + \epsilon_{it}, \quad (1)$$

where Y_{it} is the occurrence of conflict within dyad i in year t . Treaty is a linearly decaying function varying from 1 to 0.1, as per Table 3. X is a vector of dyadic control variables.

The unit of analysis in the dyad-year, and the sample is restricted to ten years before and after a treaty event. The year of the treaty itself is not included in the analysis. Dyads that never signed a treaty do not enter the sample, even as they may have waged war with one another. In sum, this approach compares treaties' effect to one another, on the basis of their godliness. The coefficient of interest is the interaction term between the decaying treaty effect and godliness.

Table 3: Tapered Treaty Event

Time	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	t	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Treaty Weight	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		1	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.1

Table 4 shows a first set of estimations in which I interact the decaying treaty event with a godliness weight (the number of invocations of divine authority in that treaty). I also control for the presence of a shared body of water, whether the dyad shares the same religion, as well as the number of Protestant parties. Columns 1-2 are estimated through a panel OLS model with fixed effects, and columns 3-4 show estimates from a probit model, also with dyad fixed effects. Throughout the estimations, the God-weighted treaty has a consistent negative effect on the odds of conflict. That is, the presence of divine invocations in a treaty appears to amplify its conflict-abating effect.

Figure 4 graphs the interaction effect. The marginal effect of treaties is consistently negative across the range of godliness (it never crosses the zero threshold), but has a far more pronounced conflict-abating effect at higher levels of godliness. At zero levels of godliness, their conflict-abating is limited. Another means of seeing this is by looking at the coefficient for the treaty component of the interaction, which is consistently negatively signed, but falls short of significance. In other words, it seems that during this period, those treaties that lacked any invocation of divine authority had little significant effect on prolonging peace. It was when they bound themselves to divine authority that they became effective.

3.4.1 Treaties, Godliness, and Battle Deaths

The analysis above relies on a binary operationalization of war, which offers little nuance. Wright's definition of war denotes a legal state of conflict; it does not distinguish between a small conflict and a large one. Yet in assessing the effectiveness of peace agreements, the scale of conflict should

Table 4: The Effect of Invocations of Divine Authority on Peace

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treaty (10-yr taper)	-0.0008 (0.0013)	-0.0007 (0.0013)	-0.0121 (0.0105)	-0.0128 (0.0106)
Godliness Weight	0.0072*** (0.0024)	0.0073*** (0.0024)	0.0254*** (0.0086)	0.0248*** (0.0085)
Treaty (10-yr taper) × Godliness Weight	-0.0005*** (0.0001)	-0.0005*** (0.0001)	-0.0019*** (0.0005)	-0.0019*** (0.0005)
Shared Sea		0.3087** (0.1406)		2.2165** (0.8978)
Coreligionist Dyad		-0.0193 (0.0667)		-0.4799 (0.8283)
Protestant Parties		-0.0620 (0.0665)		0.0498 (0.7029)
Observations	4197	4197	2343	2343
Dyad Fixed Effects	Y	Y	Y	Y

Robust standard errors clustered on dyad in parentheses.

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

matter: a peace agreement might be effective in preventing a simmering conflict from escalating into a greater one, or it might lead to restraint on the part of the belligerents.

To try and capture some of this nuance, I re-estimate the models above on the logged number of battle deaths, also taken from Wright, and supplemented by Benzell and Cooke. The scale of conflicts in the sample varies a great deal, from 300 fatalities in the War of the Bavarian Succession of 1778, to the 8 million casualties of the Thirty Years War. The coverage is not complete; some wars identified in Table 4 lack data on casualties, yet the added nuance remains valuable.

The results are shown in Table 5. In columns 1-2, I use the same approach as above, looking at the 10 years before and after each dyad treaty. In columns 3-4, I consider only war years: this amounts to asking, conditional on a war occurring, does the signature of a peace treaty lessen its severity, and does the godliness of that treaty amplify that effect? The findings are consistent: the interaction between the treaty event and the God weight—measured either as the total count of invocation of divine authority, or as the occurrence of the term “God”—has a significant negative effect on the number of casualties. The results also hold when the dyad fixed effects are replaced by a vector of control variables, including the number of war years within the dyad over the past decade, an indicator of a shared sea, and an indicator for coreligionist dyads (see Table 7 in the Appendix).

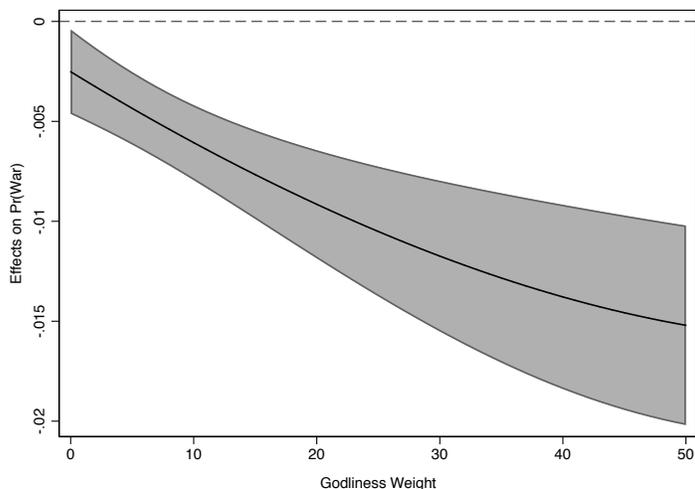


Figure 4: Average Marginal Effects of Treaties on Peace, Across Godliness

It is difficult to interpret the substantive impact of the God count; the number of occurrences of a term lacks intuitive meaning. One way of rendering this substantive effect more intuitive is to transform the godliness measure into a binary variable, denoting either the presence or the absence of any divine invocations. When doing so, the marginal conflict-abating effect of treaties is amplified threefold in the presence of divine invocations.

3.4.2 Instrumental Variable Approach

Invocations of divine authority are associated with a decrease in the odds of war, but we also know that such invocations are included when they are most needed. This sets up an identification challenge: if God was not invoked randomly, but by conflict-prone dyads, then the observed effect of godliness on peace may be endogenous to the setting.

Given that divine invocations appear in peace treaties between *more* war prone dyads, it follows that estimates in Tables 4 and 5 should be thought of as conservative. Yet in an attempt to more precisely estimate this effect, I also try to instrument for the God-weighted, tapered treaty event using the logged distance of the signatories to the Vatican. Estimates from a two-stage least squares estimation in Tables 8 in the Appendix. The model controls for the distance between the signatories, the presence of a shared body of water, and an indicator for co-religionist dyads. It accounts for time with a time trend in columns 1-2, and cubic splines in column 3. As above, the effect of God-weighted peace treaties appears consistently conflict-abating. Even when

Table 5: The Effect of Invocations of Divine Authority on Battle Deaths

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treaty (10-yr taper)	-0.428 (0.323)	-0.383 (0.330)	0.456 (1.009)	0.433 (0.970)
Total Godliness Weight	0.060 (0.043)		-0.001 (0.028)	
Treaty (10-yr taper) × Total Godliness Weight	-0.177*** (0.058)		-0.225** (0.107)	
God Weight		0.146 (0.101)		0.008 (0.057)
Treaty (10-yr taper) × God Weight		-0.330** (0.130)		-0.234* (0.131)
Constant	1.426*** (0.200)	1.349*** (0.225)	14.024*** (0.399)	13.870*** (0.461)
Dyad Fixed Effects	Y	Y	Y	Y
Cubic splines	Y	Y		
Observations	4131	4131	335	335

Robust standard errors clustered on dyad in parentheses.

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

instrumenting for variation in the frequency of divine invocation, the more of these invocations treaties contain, the better the odds of dyadic peace during the decade following the treaty. The estimates, as expected, are slightly substantively stronger than in Table 4 above.

The fact that the IV approach shows strengthened estimates in the expected direction should bolster our confidence that the positive effect of the godliness of treaties is not being driven by some form of inverse causality, whereby treaties simply reflected the strategic environment. The design of treaties seems to have had an independent effect on the occurrence of conflict. If anything, given what we know about the drivers of the design of treaties (see Table 2), the above results in Table 4 are best thought of as conservative.

4 European Treaties with the Ottoman Empire and Crimean Khans

Above, I tried to measure the average effect of treaties on the likelihood of conflict. But the historical record of diplomatic relations can also serve as a window on the effectiveness of treaties, and the role of divine invocations within them. Following the order of questions laid out in the quantitative analysis above, one might look for signs that (i) signatories themselves viewed the inclusion of invocations of divine authority as increasing the credibility of an agreement, or that (ii) they themselves were restrained by the treaties they made, as a result of those invocations.

To do so, I turn to a set of treaties not found in Parry's Consolidated Series. These cover relations between European powers with the Ottoman empire, on the one hand, and the Crimean Khans, on the other. In part, my intent is to correct for a bias towards intra-European treaties in Parry's data. But the second reason to consider these specific agreements, which have been brought to light only in the last decade, is that they offer a lens on treaties between non-coreligionists, which represent something of a hard test for the argument: can the instrumental deployment of divine authority to bolster the credibility of commitments transcend religious differences? Indeed, even between Catholic and Protestant powers, treaties continued to invoke the notion of a *respublica Christiana* for 150 years after Westphalia.⁵² They still had, and tried to make the most of, a shared identity, vested in the concept of Christendom.

Treaties between Christian and Muslim nations, on the other hand, had no such concept to appeal to. In fact, there was condemnation on both sides of the very notion of striking a settlement with what the parties variously called "heretics", "unbelievers", and "infidels". On the Christian side, such "impious treaties" had once been denounced by the Church.⁵³ The Koran instructs that treaties with infidels can be flouted. By the time of Westphalia, there was already a long history of holy war on both sides, where religion was the pretext of conflict, rather than a means of making credible commitments towards peace.

Yet on both sides, other voices argued for the pragmatism of reaching agreements with other faiths. The Korean thus makes an exception for "those idolaters who have honoured their treaties with you in every detail and aided none against you. With these keep faith, until their treaties have run their term. God loves the righteous."⁵⁴ Similarly, both Grotius and Vattel, arguing from natural law, strongly condemned the view that treaties could not be struck with non-Christians. Vattel called it a "a monstrous maxim." Grotius, before him, reached a similar conclusion.⁵⁵

What might treaties between European and Muslim powers tell us about the instrumental invocation of divine authority? To find out, I examine an assembled corpus of recently uncovered documents: 71 peace instruments between the Polish-Lithuanian empire and the Ottoman empire

⁵²See note 36, *supra*.

⁵³These "godless alliances" had been designated as *impium foedus*. See Vismara (1950), Ziegler (2004*b*).

⁵⁴Alternatively: "Perform the covenants which you have made with [the idolaters] until they shall be elapsed" (Koran IX, 4).

⁵⁵"In considering treaties, it is frequently asked, whether it be lawful to make them with nations, who are strangers to the Christian religion; a question, which, according to the law of nature, admits not of a doubt. For the rights, which it establishes, are common to all men without distinction of religion" (Grotius at 137. Ch XV VIII.)

(with which it shared a border), 69 peace instruments between the Polish-Lithuanian empire and the Crimean Khanate,⁵⁶ and 17 peace instruments between Venice and the Ottoman empire (which also shared a common, and disputed, border), spanning the 15th to the 18th century. Aside from the peace instruments themselves, we also know a great deal about the negotiations and the signing ceremonies themselves, thanks to recovered writings of emissaries on both sides.⁵⁷

The existence of these 157 peace instruments makes one thing plain: despite reticences on both sides against making commitments with non-coreligionists, Christian and Muslim rulers managed intense diplomatic relations based on formal treaties. More interestingly, these included frequent invocations of divine authority. Much like treaties concluded within Christendom, these Christian-Muslim treaties were based on oaths—in fact, the practice of oath-taking appears to have remained in Christian-Muslim treaties later than in intra-European treaties, extending well into the 17th century. The unilateral instruments of peace sent from the Ottoman empire to Western nations routinely began with an *invocatio* to God.⁵⁸ E.g. a typical peace instrument sent by the Crimean Khan might begin: “I have commenced in the name of God, who gives and grants felicity to those who faithfully keep brotherhood, and who fulfill their oath and word without any deceit or fraud and with a pure heart.”⁵⁹ In the case of the Ottoman peace instruments, the formula that appeared most explicitly invoked God as a means of protecting the commitments made: “In order to protect the clauses registered and mentioned in this [treaty],” the sultan would swear “by the Greatness of God, and by the sanctified souls of the Prophet and of all the prophets”.⁶⁰

What is further notable is that historians trace the diffusion of this practice from Western countries to Muslim nations, sometime in the 15th century. The initial point of contact appears to have been in Venetian-Byzantine treaties, meaning it had a Christian origin. Ménage (1980) argues that the “elaborate oath” of the Ottoman peace treaties emerged as “calques upon Christian oaths,

⁵⁶The Crimean Khanate was the Islamicized Genghisid remnant of the “Golden Horde”. It was variously considered as independent from, and a protectorate of, the Ottoman empire.

⁵⁷The corpus covering Polish-Lithuanian relations is translated and annotated in Kolodziejczyk (2011) and Kolodziejczyk (1999). The instruments covering Venetian treaties are documented and annotated in Theunissen (1998).

⁵⁸The main difference with intra-European treaties is that Christian-Muslim diplomatic relations were premised on an exchange of unilateral letters pledging peace, called *'ahdnames*, rather than agreements around a common document. This was a means of reconciling binding commitments with the fact that “Islamic law, on principle, excluded any relations on terms of equality with non-Muslims” (Duchhardt, 2004).

⁵⁹Peace instrument addressed to the Polish Lithuanian empire, 1514.

⁶⁰See, for instance, the 1607 *'ahdname* sent by the Sultan Ahmed I to King Sigismund III. Collected in: Kolodziejczyk (1999).

introduced under pressure from Christian, probably Venetian, negotiators seeking to bind with sanctions more effective (in their view)". Yet from that point on, we see the gradual adoption of oath-taking and invocations of divine authority in peace treaties by the Ottoman empire, including in their own subsequent treaties signed with e.g. the Persians. In other words, the practice of invoking the divine to bolster promises diffused first through coercion, then through selective emulation.

Following the *invocatio*, these treaties often included a *sanctio*, a promissory clause where the parties explicitly vowed to respect the terms of the treaty, which nearly always relied on invocations of the divine: "We swear to God by the faith, His Excellency our prophet Muhammad, and by the 124,000 prophets that we will not violate our present letter of agreement or anything that we have uttered". There would often follow a statement about the consequences that would befall any violator of the treaty. These could be quite imaginative. An oath pronounced by the Crimean Khan Mengli Giray in 1513 included the provision that a violation of his commitments would automatically result in his "becoming a heathen and his wife becoming divorced from him."⁶¹

Beyond the content of these treaties, documentation has survived of the underlying negotiations, and instructions from rulers to their emissaries. This historical record offers a number of clues to suggest that sovereigns on both sides believed invocations of divine authority bolstered the bindingness of treaties. They did not always understand the faith of the other side, but they tried to exploit it in the course of treaty-making.

In this way, in the 16th century, King Sigismund, the ruler of the Polish-Lithuanian empire, which signed a series of instruments of peace with the Crimean Khans, asked his ambassadors to ensure that the instrument be "written in Muslim words". As one historian of the period notes, this was apparently done "in the hope that the khan would not break a promise written in Arabic—the sacred script of the Koran" (Kolodziejczyk, 2011). Similarly, the Vilnius chancery regularly prepared a ready oath formula for the Khan, which employed Arabic formulas and invoked the Prophet Muhammad.

Muscovian rulers held analogous beliefs. The Kremlin kept a permanent copy of the Koran (it is thought that the capitals of Vilnius and Cracow did the same), so that delegates from Muslim nations would take their oath "upon their Holy Scripture and according to their own religion"

⁶¹See Kolodziejczyk (2011).

(ibid). In one recorded instance in 1623, the Muscovian emissary insisted that the Khan Mehmed III Giray swear his oath on the “Russian” Koran brought by the embassy from Moscow, since the emissary could be certain of its authenticity, whereas he had no means of verifying the authenticity of the holy book the Khan held. The Khan is said to have been amused, and ultimately obliged the Muscovites.⁶²

Just as it had within Christendom, the instrumental deployment of divine authority elevated the role of clergy in political affairs. Thus, following a resorption of hostilities with the Crimean Khanate, King Sigismund sought out a new intermediary, the chief mullah in the Khan’s court. He specifically asked him for mediation in the hope that “the khan and the princes [sultans] would not lie to him”, since he was the “spiritual person at [the court of] the great khan” (ibid). As Kolodziejczyk (2011) puts it, “Personally religious and aware of the great influence of clergy in Poland-Lithuania, the king assumed that a Muslim religious authority might ensure that the khan would keep his oath for a longer time.”

The Crimean side held similar beliefs about the power of oaths among Christian rulers. In 1564, the Crimean Khan Devlet Giray insisted that in making his oath, Tsar Ivan IV had to kiss the cross “in the presence of the Orthodox metropolitan, the boyars, and the Crimean envoy”; otherwise the treaty would be void. The Tsar obliged, and the peace instrument was thus concluded (Kolodziejczyk, 2011).

In sum, even in the case of Christian-Muslim treaties, where religion had been a source of strife rather than cooperation, treaties relied on oaths and invocations of divine authority, which were perceived by both sides as strengthening the bindingness of their commitments. Both Christian and Muslim rulers routinely insisted that the other party follow its religious precepts exactly: they demanded that the right words, practices, and witnesses be present, often making the conclusion of the treaty conditional on it. They visibly did not always fully understand the other side’s religious beliefs and practices, but sought to exploit them to render the other party’s commitments more binding.

It is useful to end with a scope condition. I have held out Christian-Muslim relations as a hard test for the instrumental invocation of God in treaties. But both parties believed the other to be bound by a divine authority that shared at least some aspects of their own: these were

⁶²In Kolodziejczyk (2011, 482).

two Abrahamic, monotheistic religions. Conversely, treaties between European states and non-monotheist nations are entirely bereft of invocations of divine authority. The Treaty of Nanking; the treaties between the Dutch and sovereigns in Indonesia; the British treaties with Indian rulers—none of these feature invocations of divine authority. Similarly, 18th century British-American treaties routinely contained religious formulations, such as an *invocatio* to the Holy Trinity; treaties the US struck with indigenous tribes in the same year featured no equivalent.

5 Conclusion

The central concept of international relations is anarchy, defined as the lack of a supreme authority. I have argued that for much of the post-Westphalia period, sovereigns would not have thought of themselves as operating under anarchy such defined. And for good reason: they continued to systematically invoke a “supreme power”, a divine one, when seeking to make commitments to one another. Strikingly, this practice endured even after the material underpinnings of divine authority fell away: the Vatican lost much of its political power, and the Reformation split the continent along denominational lines, and yet treaties continued to invoke divine authority. In this way, international anarchy as we understand it today only really emerges sometime in the latter half of the 19th century, when invocations of divine authority disappeared from treaties for good.

We know legal texts are sticky, but here they proved to be selectively so. Treaties were especially likely to invoke God when the stakes were high, the risk of conflict was imminent, and credibility was at a premium. Most strikingly, these invocations appear to have some observable effects. As I show by looking at the odds of conflict throughout the post-Westphalian period, treaties proved effective in prolonging peace, and those that relied on invocations of divine authority proved especially so. So much, that it was quite some time before public international law could imbue state commitments with as much credibility as the invocation of divine authority.

The field of international relations is prone to a type of self-congratulation, premised on the belief that our understanding of credibility, commitment, and cooperation under anarchy is unprecedented. Sovereign states delegating power to outside enforcement bodies is portrayed as a post-1945 phenomenon. One forgets that pre-modern eras had their own solutions to the challenges posed by international anarchy. These solutions appear to have successfully affected behavior.

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6 Appendix

Table 6: State Entities in Main Analysis

Name(s) of State Entities	Time Range		
Archduchy of Austria/Habsburg Empire/Austrian Crownlands/Austria-Hungary	1648/1817/1832	1917/1918	*
Baden	1815	1871	
Bavaria	1648	1871	
Belgium	1831	1918	
Bohemia	1648	1705	
Bulgaria/Principality of Bulgaria/Kingdom of Bulgaria	1851/1879	1918	*
County Palatine of the Rhine/Electoral Palatinate/The Palatinate	1648	1803	
Duchy of Holstein	1815	1863	
Duchy of Limburg	1839	1840	
Duchy of Lucca	1815	1847	
Duchy of Luxembourg	1815	1918	
Duchy of Parma	1815	1859	
Electorate/Margraviate of Brandenburg	1648	1871	
England, Kingdom of England/ England-Scotland/Great Britain/United Kingdom	1648	1918	
France	1648	1910/1918	*
Germany	1648	1918	
Grand Duchy of Tuscany	1797	1860	
Grand Duchy of Tuscany	1816	1861	
Hanover	1692/1815	1866/1871	*
Hesse Electorate	1815	1866	
Hungary	1648	1705	
Independent Principality of Lichtenstein	1866	1918	
Kingdom of Denmark	1648	1918	
Kingdom of Naples/Naples	1648	1816/1918	*
Kingdom of Poland/Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth	1648	1764	
Kingdom of Romania/United Principalities/Kingdom of Romania/Moldavia	1648	1918	
Kingdom of Sweden	1648	1918	
Mecklenburg-Schwerin	1867	1871	
Mecklenburg-Strelitz	1867	1871	
Netherlands	1648	1918	
Oldenburg	1867	1871	
Ottoman Empire	1648	1918	
Republic of Venice	1648	1797	
Russia	1648	1917	
Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach	1867	1871	
Saxony	1648/1815	1871	*
Sicily	1648	1816	
Spain	1648	1918	*

* Asterisked entities denote multiple changing state entities over time.

6.1 Divine Authority Dictionaries

English dictionary

God, amen, almighty, Trinity, Divine, sacred, facred, Christian, Chriftian, holy, Most High, providence, legislator fo the universe, blessed, author of peace, gospels

Subtract phrases:

Holy Roman, Sacred Roman, Facred Roman, Sacred Imperial, Facred Imperial, Christian majesty, Christian majefty, Christian king, Christian powers

French dictionary

Dieu, amen, trinité, tout puissant, tout puissant, divin, divine, sacré, facré, chrétien, providence, défenseur de la foi, législateur de l'univers, béni, bénisse, béniffe, saint esprit, évangiles,

Subtract phrases:

majesté chrétienne, roi chrétien, puissances chrétiennes, puiffances chrétiennes, Roi Très-Chrétien, Très-Chrétienne,

Latin God dictionary

Deus, Deo, dei omnipotentis, trinitatis, dei domini, Dei benedictis, dei gratia, amen, divina, divinum, sacrum, sacri, sacram, sacro-sanctae, facrum, facri, facram, facro-fanctae, providentiam, christiano, chriftiano, christiana, chriftiana, Christianitatis, Chrifitianitatis, benedictione, benedicente, evangeliis, sanctissime, sanctiffime, fanctiffime, sancti, fancti

Subtract phrases:

Christianissimae Majestatis, Sacra Regia, sacro romano imperio, sancti maiestas, sacram majestatem, Rex Christiana, Christiane Potestates, sacri romani imperii,

6.2 Additional Graphs

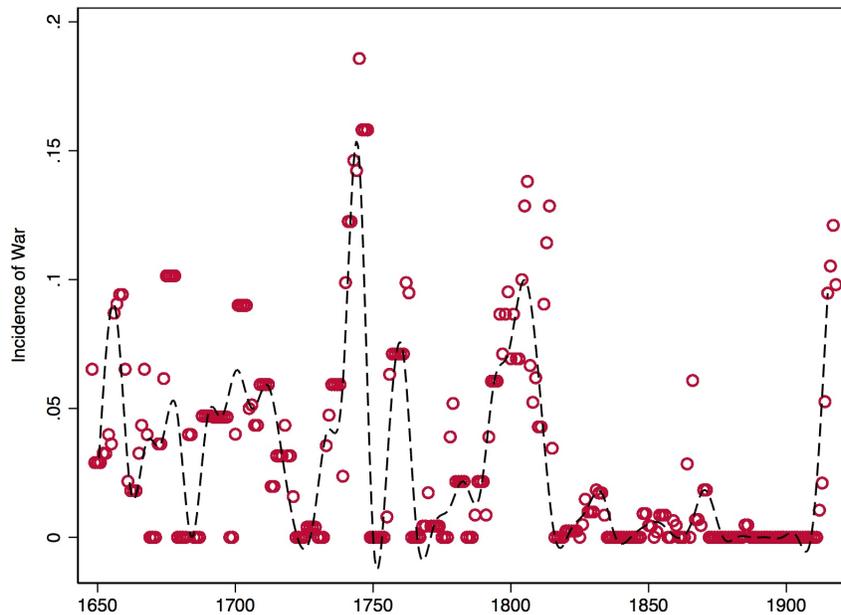


Figure 5: Incidence of War Across Period Under Observation

6.3 Additional Estimations

Table 7: The Effect of Invocations of Divine Authority on Battle Deaths

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Treaty (10-yr taper)	-0.428 (0.323)	-0.383 (0.330)	0.456 (1.009)	0.433 (0.970)	-0.649** (0.310)	-0.235 (0.319)	0.407 (0.824)	0.310 (0.855)
Total Godliness Weight	0.060 (0.043)		-0.001 (0.028)		0.098** (0.044)		0.009 (0.033)	
Treaty (10-yr taper) × Total Godliness Weight	-0.177*** (0.058)		-0.225** (0.107)		-0.284*** (0.067)		-0.251*** (0.095)	
God Weight		0.146 (0.101)		0.008 (0.057)		0.171* (0.100)		-0.010 (0.055)
Treaty (10-yr taper) × God Weight		-0.330** (0.130)		-0.234* (0.131)		-0.335** (0.130)		-0.223* (0.132)
War years over past decade					0.737*** (0.067)		0.192*** (0.065)	
Shared Sea					-0.300 (0.297)	-0.103 (0.323)	-1.615** (0.702)	-1.411** (0.666)
Coreligionist Dyad					0.041 (0.246)	0.135 (0.345)	-0.236 (0.507)	-0.305 (0.500)
Constant	1.426*** (0.200)	1.349*** (0.225)	14.024*** (0.399)	13.870*** (0.461)	1.027*** (0.375)	1.011** (0.408)	15.300*** (0.756)	15.733*** (0.731)
Observations	4131	4131	335	335	4112	4114	327	327

Robust standard errors clustered on dyad in parentheses.

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 8: The Effect of Invocations of Divine Authority on Peace, IV: Distance to Vatican

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Treaty Weighted by Divine Invocations	-0.0009*** (0.0002)	-0.0009** (0.0004)	-0.0009** (0.0005)
Geographic distance (log)		0.0571 (0.0687)	0.0743 (0.0694)
Shared Sea		0.3364** (0.1453)	0.2719** (0.1340)
Coreligionist Dyad		-0.0234 (0.0349)	-0.0382 (0.0377)
Year	-0.0011*** (0.0002)	-0.0011*** (0.0004)	
Dyad Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cubic Splines	No	No	Yes
Observations	4180	4180	4180

Robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered on dyad in columns 2-3.

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$