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# Religions and Global Security

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We live in a world that is not supposed to exist. Religion was supposed to decline with modernization and economic development. Depending on your preferred version of the end of history, Marxist or socialist ideology were supposed to mobilize the wretched of earth to overthrow capitalism and imperialism, or capitalism, free markets, and liberal democracy were supposed to transform the world. Yet over the past thirty years, to the surprise of Western social scientists, politicians, and policy-makers, a global resurgence of religion has taken place in international relations<sup>1</sup>. Religion rather than secular ideology has increasingly mobilized people in developing countries. It increasingly influences the politics of developed countries, not only the United States, widely regarded as the most religious and most developed country, but religion also increasingly influences the politics of more secular European countries. This article briefly examines some of the main features of this global resurgence of religion, and what the implications may be for global security.

## The Main Features of the Global Resurgence of Religion

A number of central features characterize the global resurgence of religion in the twenty-first century. First, the religious resurgence is global in a geographic sense. It is not confined to any particular region of the world, the American South, Africa, Central Asia, or the Middle East so it is more broadly based than religious fundamentalism.

Second, the religious resurgence is a key part of the global South, and follows a massive, general, *demographic* shift in population from the developed countries in the North – Europe, North America, the lands of the former Soviet Union – to the developing countries. The North accounted for 32 percent of the world's population in 1900, 29 percent in 1950, 25 percent in 1970, about 18 percent in 2000, and it is estimated that the North will account for only 10-12 percent of the world's population in 2050. Scholars of international relations often juxtapose terms such as “the Islamic world” and “the West”, with the idea that “the West”, at least in a cultural sense still represents Christianity. However, the reality is that Christianity is increasingly a *post-Western religion* dominated by peoples, cultures, and countries of the global South, and the West in many ways is already or is becoming a *post-Christian* civilization<sup>2</sup>. Christianity in the twenty-first century is effectively going back to where it was in the first millennium, when it was a global and non-Western religion, and spread east from Palestine

<sup>1</sup> F. PETITO - P. HATZOPOULOS (eds.), *Religion in International Relations: The Return from Exile*, New York 2003; S.M. THOMAS, *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations*, New York 2005; J. MICKLETHWAIT - A. WOOLDRIDGE, *God is Back: How the Global Revival of Faith is Changing the World*, New York 2009.

<sup>2</sup> L. SANNEH, *Whose Religion is Christianity*, Grand Rapids 2003; J.L. ALLEN, *The Future Church: How Ten Trends are Revolutionizing the Catholic Church*, New York 2009.

to Iraq, and on to India and China, becoming accepting of, and accepted by, other religions before it was *reduced* to being a Western and a European religion after the Mongol invasions, when it then became more closely associated with European culture<sup>3</sup>.

Third, the global resurgence of religion is also taking place throughout the world in countries with different religious and cultural traditions, including the non-Christian world religions – Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. The rise in Orthodox Judaism, for example, in Israel and the United States is having an impact on politics in both countries (displacing more liberal Jewish secularism since conservative Jews – like conservative Muslims and Christians – also believe children are a blessing from God, and so they have more children than secular Jews, and so liberal Jews, like religious liberal generally, are literally dying out). Remarkably, given their Marxist pasts, genuine religious revivals are also going on in China and in Russia. Particularly important is the overlap of Islamic and Christian revivals in some of the world's most populous countries.

## Christianity in China and East Asia

Christianity is exploding in China, which comprises a fifth of the world's population, and the state now encourages religion, even if it is for its own ends – social order amidst a rapid economic development<sup>4</sup>. China has one of the largest numbers of Pentecostal and evangelical Christian populations in the world, particularly among the growing, upwardly mobile, middle class, which highlights the importance of non-Western Christianity for world politics. Pentecostalism is also at the cutting edge of Christian growth in South Korea, Thailand, and Vietnam, all of which have vibrant and significant Christian minorities.

The issue is not whether China is going to become through national conversion a predominantly Christian country: that is unlikely. Rather, it is whether Christianity will in the coming decades achieve the same degree of cultural permeation of national life in China that it has already achieved in South Korea. What this possible religious change means for democracy, human rights, and foreign policy will need to be part of any evaluation of China's role in international relations in the twenty-first century<sup>5</sup>.

## Revival of Orthodox Christianity in Russia

A genuine religious revival of Orthodox Christianity is also taking place in Russia after 70 years of suppression, and this suggests how durable some reli-

<sup>3</sup> P. JENKINS, *The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia – and How it Died*, New York 2008.

<sup>4</sup> H.H. LAI, *The Religious Revival in China*, in «The Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies», 18, 2003, pp. 40-64.

<sup>5</sup> D. AIKMAN, *Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity Is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power*, London 2006<sup>2</sup>.

gious identities can be even in a global era. The Russia Orthodox Church's recent unification of its domestic and overseas hierarchies, a legacy of the Soviet era, and closer church-state relations, facilitated by "petro-populism" or "oil and gas nationalism", has established the religious and political foundations for Orthodox identity politics – a greater role of Russia and Russian Orthodox Church on the world stage. The Moscow Patriarchate sees reunification as an important step in spreading its global influence, and the Russian state sees the restoring of the unity of the entire Russian world – the ties between Russia proper and the Russian diaspora (in which Orthodoxy is its spiritual foundation), as part of its quest to regain global influence<sup>6</sup>.

### The Overlap between Islam and Christianity

The world religions where we can really see explosions of religious fervour are the global Islamic resurgence and the global spread of evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity. The global Islamic resurgence is a genuine Islamic revival, and it is more wide-ranging than Islamic fundamentalism. There is a visible return to Islam – it can be observed, in dress (the veil for women, a beard for men), prayers, rituals, etc. in various countries that make up the Islamic world. A key part of this revival, at the grass roots, is that people want "Islam" in some sense – and, this is what is up for debate, discussion, or more violent conflict – to be the organizing principle in their lives and also in their society (for example, the politics over the *contested meanings of Islam and secularism* in Turkey in 2007 and Iran in 2009). The fact that global Islamic revivalism is often anti-Western does not detract from the *religious* reality of Islamic revivalism. Globalization has facilitated a sense of a wider Islamic identity and concern for foreign affairs in the Islamic world.

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The Islamic world is far larger than the Arab world, stretching across non-Arab Central and South Asia through to Southeast Asia, up to and including Indonesia, which is quite

probably the Muslim country with the largest population (Table 1). In fact, the largest Muslim countries (and seven of the top 8) are non-Arab, and are mostly outside the Middle East, which qualifies any quick generalizations about Islam regarding women, terrorism, democracy, or capitalism. Three of the largest Muslim countries are in South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh), and one (Indonesia) is in Southeast Asia. Turkey (in Europe) is also on the top ten list, so if Turkey joins the EU, the EU will have as a member one of the largest Muslim

<sup>6</sup> C. MARSH (ed.), *Burden or Blessing? Russian Orthodoxy and the Construction of Civil Society and Democracy*, Boston 2004.

**Table 1** – The Islamic World: Muslim Population by Country

Rank	Country	Muslim Population	% Muslim
1	Indonesia	206,701,580	86.1%
2	Pakistan	167,430,805	95.0%
3	India	156,254,615	13.4%
4	Bangladesh	129,522,232	83.0%
5	Turkey	76,651,912	99.8%
6	Egypt	74,774,582	90.0%
7	Nigeria	74,614,545	50.0%
8	Iran	65,100,698	98.0%
9	Morocco	34,406,192	98.7%
10	Algeria	30,760,369	99.0%
11	Sudan	28,761,477	70.0%
12	Afghanistan	28,112,040	99.0%
13	Saudi Arabia	28,686,633	100.0%
14	Iraq	28,077,287	97.0%
15	Ethiopia	27,957,846	32.8%

Source: CIA World FACT BOOK, 2009.

countries in the world. By current projections Nigeria (a country whose population is almost evenly split between Muslims and Christians) will have a larger population than Pakistan or Bangladesh in 2050, and may be expected to climb further up the list of countries with the largest Muslim populations. Nigeria's Muslim-Christian demographics and (in the Islamic, northern part of the country) the confluence of criminal syndicates and radical Islamist groups have created concerns regarding international terrorism. Osama bin Laden clearly understands the demographics of religion and world politics, and he has called on his followers to focus on Nigeria since 2003 (as of this writing it is unclear whether the Nigerian suicide bomber who tried to blow up Northwest airlines flight 253 from Amsterdam to Detroit over Christmas 2009 had ties to al-Qaida as he claims, although his father warned US officials his son had had radical Islamist views).

The global spread of Pentecostalism and evangelical Protestantism is the most dramatic religious explosion in the world today. It has now replaced the Eastern Orthodox churches as the largest single group of Christian denominations after Catholicism. It used to be thought that Pentecostal or evangelical Christianity were mainly private and personal (i.e. their growth would not con-

flict with perceived trends toward greater secularization), and that its followers were largely apolitical in their outlook. However, Pentecostalism's growing numbers indicates it will be a major social force shaping politics and religion in twenty-first century<sup>7</sup>.

Pentecostalism is rapidly spreading across the world, and is remaking the face of global Christianity. According to the *World Christian Database* there may be as many as 250 million Pentecostals: one-eighth of the world's 2 billion Christian, and about one in twenty-five of the global population<sup>8</sup>.

Tables 1 and 2 show that three of the countries with the largest Muslim populations (India, Indonesia, and Nigeria) are also countries with the largest number of Pentecostal Christians and have sizable Christian minorities overall.

The majority of Indians are Hindu (80.5 percent), but this dominance masks the considerable religious variation across India's states. Muslims make up the majority of the population in Lakshadweep (95 percent) and in Jammu and Kashmir (67 percent). Christians predominate in its small eastern states of Nagaland (90 percent), Mizoram (87 percent), and Meghalaya (70 percent), and are significant minorities in two southern states, Kerala (19 percent) and Tamil Nadu (6 percent). Sikhs are the majority in Punjab (59.9 percent). Long-standing tensions within India – notably in relation to caste – also have a significant inter-religious dimension. In particular, the movement for Dalit rights (i.e. for the country's 150 million to 250 million Dalits or “untouchables”) has long featured an undercurrent of Dalit religious conversions, notably to Islam, to Buddhism and, increasingly in recent decades to Christianity. These conversions have angered Hindu nationalists and have been an on-going source of Hindu-Christian tensions<sup>9</sup>.

Table 2 – Pentecostals by Country

Rank	Country	Population	% of Country's Population
1	China	72.0 million	5.6
2	USA	20.2 million	7.0
3	Brazil	15.0 million	9.0
4	Nigeria	13.0 million	11.0
5	Philippines	9.0 million	12.0
6	Indonesia	7.0 million	3.0
7	India	5.2 million	0.5

Source: Operation World, 2000; World Christian Database (n.d.), United Nations Population Fund, 2001.

<sup>7</sup> P. PRESTON, *Evangelicals and Politics in Asia, Africa, and Latin America*, Cambridge 2001; *Spirit and Power: A Ten-Country Survey of Pentecostals*, Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2006; D.E. MILLER - T. YAMAMORI, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement*, Berkeley 2007.

<sup>8</sup> P. PRESTON, *Evangelicals and Politics in Asia, Africa, and Latin America*, cit.; D. MARTIN, *Pentecostalism: The World their Parish*, Oxford 2002.

<sup>9</sup> *India Religious and Demographic Profile*, Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, www.pewforum.org (accessed December 27, 2009); J.L. ALLEN, *India is a Rising Catholic Power too*, in «National Catholic Reporter», November 25, 2009.

In Indonesia and Nigeria, ethnic divisions can intensify religious conflicts. Indonesia, although it is the largest Muslim country in the world also has a sizable minority Christian community of 23 million or about 10 percent of the population. What has led to inter-religious tension is that they are concentrated in particular ethnic groups in particular regions. In the cities, Christianity is associated with the ethnic Chinese, who are also often merchants – a source of tension in the wake of the economic downturn in the late 1990s. Christian regions are scattered across some Indonesian islands, including Timor, Sulawesi, Lombok, and Maluku (the Moluccas or Spice Islands). East Timor, which is predominately Catholic, achieved independence from Indonesia after a bitter and bloody liberation struggle (which Osama bin Laden opposed).

A variety of factors put strains on older traditions of Muslim-Christian, Hindu-Christian, and Muslim-Hindu tolerance in a number of major countries around the world. These include the spread of Islamic and Christian revivalism, their doctrines and demographics, and the way ethnicity and poverty (or economic success) often coincide with religious affiliation. Without greater inter-religious dialogue and more thoughtful approaches to political theology and to religion and development, it is possible the future may see more political instability and outbreaks of inter-religious violence.

These developments may also have significant geopolitical implications. In particular, as Jenkins notes, China and other countries of East Asia are frequently thought of as the Asian anchors of the Pacific Rim, but how much would it change perceptions of world politics and the prospects for conflict in East and Southeast Asia, if, in the wake of increasing Christian influences on the culture and society of these countries, the Pacific Rim came to be seen as a “Christian arc” surrounding Muslim Indonesia? The media often cast Islam as the defining religion of the developing world, but to talk about global resurgence of Islam without talking about the global spread of evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity is to miss a key part of the story<sup>10</sup>.

The global spread of Christianity is shifting its center of gravity from the industrialized countries to the developing world. The majority of Christians in the world by 2050 will be non-white, non-Western, from the ex-colonized world, rather than the former colonizers, and will espouse forms of Christianity that are more emotive and charismatic than those found in the West (which the Pew Forum’s recent study of Pentecostals indicates is not the same as saying they are mainly political conservatives like in the United States). What is more, many of these Christians will be living as minorities under non-Christian and often hos-

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<sup>10</sup> P. JENKINS, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, Oxford 2002.

tile regimes. The demographic shift in Christianity to the global South, the changing theologies of revivalist forms of Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity, the demographics of Islam and Christianity will make living with religious diversity and inter-religious dialogue, especially the relations between Muslims and Christians, but also increasingly relations with Hindus and Buddhists, and the politics of religious freedom and toleration, increasingly important issues in international politics in the twenty-first century.

## Religion and Global Security

The potential consequences for global security of the trends in the global resurgence of religion examined in the first section can be more clearly seen through the levels of analysis framework used in the theory of international relations. First, the more over-arching, *global level* picks up on the impact of economics, technology, and globalization on the religious resurgence. Second, the *inter-state level* (the level of analysis of the states in the international system, as international relations is conventionally defined) examines what these demographic trends mean for diplomacy, statecraft, and the relations between states more generally. Finally, how these demographic trends may impact religion, politics, and political stability are examined at the *state and society* level of analysis.

## The Global Level of Analysis

The global or world level of analysis seeks to explain the outcomes in international relations in terms of global natural, social, or technological forces that transcend the relations between states at the level of analysis of the international system (i.e. international relations as it is usually understood). This level is becoming increasingly important because of the integrating and fragmenting effects of globalization on international relations.

Globalization is rapidly dissolving the social and economic barriers between states, transforming the world's diverse populations into a more *unified* world – global markets, a global youth culture, and an age of global information (e.g. mobile phone pictures of police brutality in Egypt, vote rigging in Zimbabwe, or of anti-government protests in Iran). Globalization is also creating a more *fragmented* and heterogeneous world, facilitating more particular identities. On the one hand, globalization facilitates or makes it easier for people of a similar identity to come together across time, space, and distance across the globe. On the other hand, it contributes to the ethnic, religious, and racial hatreds that are fragmenting the political landscape into smaller and smaller units.

However, what is really happening is more complicated than this since the global and the local are becoming more closely linked together in a kind of “global particularity”. One key example is the rise of “globalized Islam”, in which types of radical Islam around the world blur the connection between Islam, a specific society, and a specific territory<sup>11</sup>. Another example is the transnational links between churches and denominations that make up global evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity.

Thus, the global resurgence of religion is not about, nor was it ever only about, old, primordial, fears and hatreds, but also *new* ones, in response to the paradoxical interdependence of these social forces that are unifying and fragmenting the world at the same time<sup>12</sup>. Therefore, it may be argued that conflict is not the result, or not only the result, of the *existence* of “difference” or of cultural and religious pluralism. Conflict is the result of the *collapse*, or the threat of the collapse, of difference resulting from the forces of globalization.

How does the global level of analysis help us examine the impact of the religious resurgence on global security? First, globalization is rapidly changing what religion is, and so globalization is changing what *constitutes* religious actors or religious non-state actors in international relations. In other words, how *globalization* is changing religion, and how *religion* is changing globalization are key aspects of the way social change influences international relations.

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Ever since Samuel Huntington popularized the notion of the “clash of civilizations” most accounts of religion in international relations have followed an analysis of the static and rather well-delineated blocs that make up the main world religions and civilizations – Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism. However, this assumes stability in the global religious landscape, and a rather static approach to religious non-state actors that is quite at odds with the reality of religion and religious change in the twenty-first century.

Second, there is a constantly evolving role of religion in international relations. Rapid religious and social changes are taking place in the Islamic world, which has produced a variety of the Islamic non-state actors – al-Qaeda, Hamas, and Hezbollah, etc. – but there are a variety of Islamic non-state actors that are not terrorist groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood (Islamic political movements that are active in Egypt, Algeria, Jordan, Kuwait, Syria, and the Sudan). The missionary organization, Tablighi Jamaat (the Society for the Propagation of the Muslim faith) is probably the largest Islamic non-state actor in the world, and is probably the single most important element in the Islamic global resurgence. In other words, the more well-publicized Islamic terrorist groups are not

<sup>11</sup> O. ROY, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*, London 2002.

<sup>12</sup> B.R. BARBER, *Jihad vs. McWorld: How Globalism and Tribalism are Reshaping the World*, New York 1996;

I. CLARK, *Globalization and Fragmentation: international relations in the twentieth century*, Oxford 1997.



the only (or necessarily even the most important) Islamic non-state actors in world politics.

Third, globalization is helping to create or expand the existing ethnic and religious diaspora communities around the world. Diaspora communities are one of the most significant types of non-state actors in world politics in the twenty-first century. Religious diaspora communities have contributed to the changing nature of conflict, and they can complicate the problems of security and global terrorism. In fact, this is why, among experts in security and intelligence, the concept of a global “war on terrorism” is giving way to the wider notion of a global Islamic insurgency<sup>13</sup>. Diaspora communities are not new, and they have been a part of history for a long time, if we think, for example, of the Chinese or Jewish diasporas, and the Arab diaspora, mainly the Syrian and Lebanese communities in the failed states in West Africa-Sierra Leone, Senegal, and Liberia.

These global links or networks do not just happen; they are not free-floating, but are social networks, embedded in religious diaspora communities that are a key aspect of religious transnationalism. Thus, rather than be carried away with the idea that such social networking is one of the hall marks of globalization and a significant new feature of international politics, one should remember that such social and information networks have been part of much of human history, and a part of the main world religions for centuries, and existed long before the modern international system.

It is these kinds of local-global social networks that allow Al-Qaeda and Hezbollah in Lebanon to do illicit fundraising and money laundering in East, Central, and West Africa. Similarly, Nigeria, Cote d’Ivoire, and Liberia, have become a concern because of their ability, until recent political changes, to contravene UN restrictions on conflict diamonds. In Nigeria, in the northern states, for example, criminal syndicates and radical Islamist groups have been able to come together. Al-Qaeda can flourish through local, almost sub-contracted, religious extremists, such as Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines or Jemaah Islamiah in Indonesia. Radical clerics, trained in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, or elsewhere, have sought asylum in Europe or North America, to spread more radical, extremist forms of Islam in the West.

Unfortunately, globalization has blurred the lines between religious organizations involved in social welfare and those involved in global terrorism. If Islamic social welfare organizations in the West or throughout the Islamic world collect money for Palestine, then it can happen that Hamas or Hezbollah can use these funds for terrorist activities. However, the use of religious social networks in this way is not a new problem. This is how the Sufi brotherhoods in North Africa supported the Islamic resistance fighters against the French occupation in the nineteenth century. The social and charitable networks may fund, or recruit,

<sup>13</sup> D. KILCULLEN, *Counter-insurgency Redux*, in «Survival», 48, 2006, pp. 222-230.

suicide bombers, but they also promote and maintain communities. Christianity is growing in urban Africa, and Islam is growing because of the welfare services provided by faith-based organizations. Given the weak states, corruption, and crumbling social infrastructures, charities and faith-based organizations are a main source of education, social welfare, and health care in developing countries.

Globalization also enables (or even empowers) people in diaspora communities to create or participate in a variety of new types of global or transnational identities, offering new types of community and political action. There is nothing wrong with this, and a variety of advocacy or pressure groups – Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and most development NGOs – rely on this kind of identification for financial support.

However, globalization can enable people in diaspora communities to create or participate in new, radical forms of identity and political action. A key current example is what Olivier Roy calls “globalized Islam”, in which

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types of radical Islam around the world are connected less directly to the religion, a specific society, and a territory. Among diaspora Muslim communities in the West, the revival of Islam may not be a backlash against modernization or Westernization, but is a consequence of it. Young, rootless, Muslims, living as a minority in Western societies can become part of a “global Ummah” – a global Islamic majority, the global Muslim community through videos, the Internet, and cheap air tickets (to places such as Pakistan, Nigeria, or Yemen). This can lead to new forms of radicalism ranging from support for Al-Qaeda to the rejection of social integration into Western societies<sup>14</sup>.

Diaspora communities in which ethnicity and religion can facilitate these new forms of identity exist in other religion as well. The (Hindu) Tamil diaspora funded and supported the civil war against Sri Lanka’s (Buddhist-nationalist) government. The middle class Indian diaspora in California’s Silicon Valley has funded Hindu nationalist parties in India – the RSS and the BJP. In other words, religious diaspora communities, including those that constitute prominent religious minorities in Western countries, can play important roles in the international politics of ethnic conflicts and religious fundamentalism.

## The Interstate Level of Analysis

The inter-state level of analysis focuses on the implications of global religious trends for the diplomacy and statecraft of international relations. The concern

<sup>14</sup> O. ROY, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*, cit.

here is on how religious identities may influence the conventional dynamics of interstate relations – allies, alliances, arms races, and the balance of power, as well the ability of states to influence others. First, consider again the 25 countries most likely to be the most populous by the mid-21<sup>st</sup> century (Table 3). The general picture reinforces what has already been said about the future global religious landscape – there is a *stagnating* population in the developed North, particularly in Europe, and a *booming* population in the global South, in which religious revivalism and religious demographics reinforce each other as part of the global resurgence of religion.

**Table 3** – The Most Populous Countries in the World to 2025 and 2050  
(population in millions)

Nation	1975	2000	2025	2050
1. India	622	1,014	1,277	1,620
2. China	918	1,262	1,464	1,471
3. United States	216	276	338	404
4. Indonesia	138	225	301	338
5. Nigeria	59	123	205	304
6. Pakistan	75	142	213	268
7. Brazil	109	173	201	206
8. Bangladesh	76	129	178	205
9. Ethiopia	33	64	115	188
10. Congo	25	52	105	182
11. Philippines	44	81	122	154
12. Mexico	61	100	134	153
13. Vietnam	48	79	106	119
14. Russia	134	146	136	118
15. Egypt	37	68	95	113
16. Japan	112	127	120	101
17. Iran	33	66	88	100
18. Saudi Arabia	7	22	48	91
19. Tanzania	16	35	60	88
20. Turkey	41	66	82	87
21. Sudan	16	35	61	84
22. Uganda	11	23	48	84
23. Germany	79	83	85	80
24. Yemen	7	17	40	71
25. Thailand	42	60	71	70

Source: P. JENKINS, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, Oxford 2002, p. 84.

Second, consider again the 25 countries most likely to be most populous by the mid-21<sup>st</sup> century, but this time compare which ones will be predominately Christian and which ones predominately Muslim (Table 4).

**Table 4** – The Religious Balance of Power Among the Largest Countries in the 21st Century

1. <i>Overwhelmingly Muslim</i>	Pakistan	Bangladesh	Saudi Arabia	Turkey	Iran	Yemen
2. <i>Mainly Muslim with significant Christian minorities</i>	Indonesia	Egypt	Sudan			
3. <i>Overwhelmingly Christian</i>	USA	Brazil	Mexico	Russia		
4. <i>Mainly Christian with significant Muslim minorities</i>	Philippines	Zaire/Congo	Germany	Uganda		
5. <i>Christian and Muslim, with neither a strong majority</i>	Nigeria	Ethiopia	Tanzania			
6. <i>Other nations, dominated by neither Christianity nor Islam</i>	India	China	Vietnam	Thailand	Japan	

Source: P. JENKINS, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, Oxford 2002, p. 167

According to Jenkins, nine will be wholly or mainly Muslim and eight wholly or mainly Christian, and three deeply divided between the two faiths ((Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Tanzania). With the important exceptions of India and China, the *future* centers of global population are mainly in countries that are *already* divided between the two of great world religions – Christianity and Islam, and so state divisions and religious divisions reinforce each other.

Does this matter, and, if so, under what *conditions* does it matter? Jenkins thinks the divisions are likely to intensify in the future. «In present-day battles in Africa and Asia, we may today be seeing the political outlines of the new century, and probably, the roots of future great power alliances»<sup>15</sup>.

However, before we can accept Jenkins's proposition regarding religion and alliance formation, we must understand far more about how culture and reli-

<sup>15</sup> P. JENKINS, *The Next Christendom*, cit.

gion influence the construction of the collective identities of states and communities in a global era. It is widely agreed in the social sciences that any conception of the “self” can be worked out only in relation to an “other”. Huntington offers a robust version of this general proposition: «We know who we are only when we know who we are not and often only when we know whom we are *against*»<sup>16</sup>. Others would accept the general self-other proposition regarding the construction of identity, but argue (in a more neutral vein) that such diversity is what societies and communities make of it: enemies, rivals, or friends<sup>17</sup>. What religious leaders and communities make of it given the global pressures on their local communities depends on a set of factors – certainly their general interpretations of piety, religious ethics, and proselytizing, and their political theology, but also the way globalization may be helping to shift the social, cultural, political, and economic influence of their respective communities in the states and societies to which they belong.

Jenkins collapses the most revivalist versions of these religious traditions with the existence of religious diversity. He seems to assume that the Crusades, a specific phase in Christian-Muslim relations that took place in the Middle East, offers the only key to interpreting the collective identities of states or societies based on Islam and Christianity, but this is not the case. In Mali, for example, young, reformist Muslim intellectuals, often trained in Pakistan or Saudi Arabia, have taken on leadership roles in new Islamic, community-based organizations. They are intent on spreading what they consider to be a purer, less Malian form of Islam, *disrupting* the long history of these religious communities, and this is true throughout West Africa.

Culture or religion is often not very useful to predict alliance formation. It is easy to think of exceptions (most recently the West’s support – against Orthodox Serbia – for Muslims in Bosnia and Kosovo), as it is of examples that correspond to faith-based alignment of interests (e.g. Orthodox states such as Greece and Russia did by in large oppose the bombing of Serbia, and Germany was pressured by domestic Catholics to recognize diplomatically Catholic Croatia’s break away from Yugoslavia, and the current hostility between Sunni states and Shi’ite states). Nevertheless, it is reasonable to conclude that the religious demographics of states constitute potential flash points for interstate conflict, and (crucially) that a country’s own debates over culture, religion, and politics (which is what determines a state’s collective identity) do tend to lead a country to frame its national interests in a way that influences its general foreign policy orientation.

Third, another aspect of how religion will influence interstate relations relates to the spread of global Pentecostalism. Notably, some of the countries with the largest number of Pentecostals in the world – Brazil, India, and China, fea-

<sup>16</sup> S.P. HUNTINGTON, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York 1996, p. 21.

<sup>17</sup> A. WENDT, *Social Theory of International Relations*, Cambridge 1999.

ture prominently in the thesis that Brazil, Russia, India, and China (the “BRICs”) will be the great powers of the future, since their economies are rapidly developing, and by the year 2050 they could eclipse most of the currently richest countries of the world<sup>18</sup>. The first section pointed out that Pentecostalism is at the cutting edge of Christian growth in East Asia, in what Jenkins sees as a potential future “Christian arc” above Indonesia. Each of these BRIC countries is likely to become a leading regional power. Thus, for example, in East and Southeast Asia there may be more significant religious dimensions to the politics of regionalism and regional integration in the future – developments that could also affect their relations with other great powers and the Western countries generally.

Fourth, religion is coming back into European politics. Europe has become a mission field for devout Muslims and evangelical Christians from the global South.

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Another aspect of how religion will influence interstate relations relates to the spread of global Pentecostalism

Europe’s seemingly weak support for its Christian heritage (the debate over the EU Constitution), the pace of Muslim immigration, and the relative birth rates of religious conservatives in Europe (compared to the birth rates of more liberal and secular Europeans), challenges European political culture, and may make Europe a growing security risk. These factors undermine the continent’s ability to handle the volatile mix of religious pluralism, Islamic radicalism, and the missionary activity of Protestant evangelicals coming from the global South. Thus, religious issues are returning to European politics, and to the politics of European identity – Muslim headscarves, the wearing of religious symbols, the meaning of religious freedom, the EU’s admission of Turkey, and the acceptable boundaries of the sacred and the profane in a variety of areas in society<sup>19</sup>.

## The State and Society Levels of Analysis

At these levels of analysis identity politics (structured around an increasing diversity of religious identities) is posing new threats to security, and it is playing an increasing role in influencing both domestic politics and foreign policies. They consider the types of domestic social, economic, political, and demographic factors that influence political actors, and the wider political culture in which these actors are embedded as determinants of a country’s domestic and foreign policies.

First, globalization has complicated multi-racial, multi-ethnic, and multi-faith relations in the West on a host of social policy issues because these *domestic* communities are increasingly part of global religious diaspora communities. Because of globalization multi-faith relations *can no longer be handled as single-*

<sup>18</sup> D. WILSON - R. PURUSHOTHAMAN, *Dreaming With BRICs: The Path to 2050*, Goldman Sachs, Global Economics Paper, 99, October 1, 2003, (<http://www2.goldmansachs.com/ideas/brics/book/99-dreaming.pdf>).

<sup>19</sup> T.A. BYNES - P. KATZENSTEIN (eds.), *Religion in an Expanding Europe*, Cambridge 2006; P. JENKINS, *God’s Continent: Christianity, Islam, and Europe’s Religious Crisis*, Oxford 2007; S. SILVESTRI, *Islam and Religion in the EU Political System*, in «West European Politics», 32, 6, 2009, pp. 1212-1239.

*country problems* within the domestic policy discourses of “race relations”, “minority rights”, or “multiculturalism”.

Social groups that are sometimes identified in terms of race, ethnicity, and religion often, although not always, have overlapping identities. Members of religious minority groups (such as Canada’s Sikh community, Muslim Algerians or Moroccans in France and the Netherlands, and Muslim Turks in Germany, the Chinese and the mainly Christian minorities in Malaysia or Indonesia), often have broader social identities facilitated by globalization and may be said to form part of transnational religious diaspora communities.

Therefore, globalization has made multi-faith relations one of the new types of “intermestic issues” in international relations (i.e. issues that symbolize the merger of domestic and international politics). The *domestic* Danish cartoon incident in 2005, for example, was transmitted and amplified throughout a *global* Islamic sub-culture, stoking violent clashes in places far from Denmark, including between Muslims and Christians across the northern states of Nigeria where Sharia law is practiced. Politically, *local* Islamic extremists in many countries were able to use the *global* knowledge of the cartoons to bolster their more *local*, Islamic, extremist, fundamentalist, credentials.

Second, a number of societies are being embroiled in a kind of *Kulturkampf*, a cultural as well as theo-political struggle taking place over the boundaries of the sacred, the secular, and the political in their common life. This makes identity politics a part of their domestic politics (in addition to colouring their international relations). The first way this may occur is when adherents of one religious tradition seek to declare nation X should be a Muslim or a Christian nation (such as Nigeria or Zambia) or a Buddhist nation (such as Sri Lanka or Thailand). Zambia’s former evangelical president, Frederick Chiluba, for example, sought to gain favour with this growing constituency by declaring the country to be a Christian nation (in opposition to the mainline churches and the significant Muslim minority). Christian-Muslim tensions were exacerbated in Nigeria’s decision to join the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Pressure exerted by monks in Thailand to have Buddhism recognized as the national religion has fuelled the Islamic insurgency in the predominately Muslim southern part of the country.

The third way religious identity may contribute to conflict is when countries have religiously divided populations, in which there is a narrow gap in power and numbers between two religions. It is in these “torn countries” (Table 5), as Jenkins calls them, that there have already been intermittent or prolonged Muslim-Christian violence – Egypt, Sudan, Nigeria, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia. The narrow gap in religious power and numbers has also surprisingly erupted in more recent outbreaks of Muslim-Christian violence in Kenya,

where such tensions have been intermittent, and in Cote d'Ivoire, where they were most non-existent until recently.

According to Jenkins, the main potential flashpoints appear to be states with minorities representing 10 or 20 percent of the population, which is sufficient to resist policies to promote religious harmonization and enough to sustain military struggles against repressive governments<sup>20</sup>. Alternatively, as the first section indicated in relation to India and Indonesia, the narrow religious gap may be located in particular regions of a country, even if one religion is predominant. Jenkins estimates that Islam and Christianity could divide no less than 10 of the world's 25 largest states in 2050. Given current trends, each one could be the scene of Christian-Muslim conflict.

Table 5 indicates how many potential torn countries there are in the world (those in which there is a minority religious group that reaches Jenkins' flashpoint of 10

to 20 percent of the population). However, what is remarkable is that there isn't *already* greater Christian-Muslim conflict. Clearly, other factors have to be present before demography contributes to religious conflict. These include inequality and religious persecution or discrimination<sup>21</sup>. Connected to globalization, in addition, is the way the integrating, homogenizing aspects of globalization can threaten authentic development (i.e. the development and modernization of those communities rooted in their own cultural and religious traditions rather than Western forms of modernization). Thus, it is the way globalization can threaten the collapse of religious identity and provoke politically motivated religious discrimination, and not the existence of religious diversity, that contributes to conflict. Indonesia provides a counter-example: this Islamic democracy with a free press, a vibrant civil society, and an active Islamic feminist movement provides a model for a new type of Islamic modernization and development.

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## Conclusion

Religion is both dividing and connecting the world in new ways that pose new challenges for both global and domestic peace, security, and prosperity. Globalization has helped to link the global and the local in countries around the world, facilitating new identities and reinforcing old ones, including identities that span and connect different religious diaspora communities across the world. The global-local linkages and diaspora communities are transforming the

<sup>20</sup> P. JENKINS, *The Next Christendom*, cit. pp. 166-167.

<sup>21</sup> J. FOX, *Religion, Civilization, and Civil War: 1945 Through the New Millennium*, Lanham 2004.



**Table 5 – “Torn Countries”? Christian-Muslim Tensions in a Globalizing world  
(Percentage of each of the World Religions)**

Country	Christianity	Islam	Hinduism	Judaism	Indigenous/ Other
Albania	30	70			
Bangladesh		83	16		1
Benin	43	24			33
Bosnia and Herzegovina	46	40			14
Bulgaria	84	12			4
Burkina Faso	10	50			40
Burundi	43	24			33
Cameroon	40	20			40
Central Af. Rep.	50	15			35
Chad	34	53			13
Congo, Dem. Rep	70	10			20
Congo, Rep. of	50	2			48
Cote d’Ivoire	34	53			13
Cyprus	82	18			5
Egypt	10	90			
Ethiopia	61	33			6
Ghana	64	16			20
India	2	13	80		5
Israel	2	16		77	
Indonesia	9	86	2		3
Kazakhstan	46	47			7
Lebanon	39	60			1
Liberia	40	20			40
Macedonia	65	33			2
Malawi	80	13			7
Mauritius	32	17	48		3
Nigeria	40	50			10
Russia	85-90	10-15			--
Sudan	5	70			25
Tanzania	30	35			35
Zanzibar	--	99			--
Togo <sup>29</sup>	20				51
Turkmenistan	9	89			2
Uganda	84	12			4
Uzbekistan	9	88			3
Zambia	50-75	24-49*			1

\* includes both Muslim and Hindu.

Source: Source: CIA World FACT BOOK, 2009.

domestic policy debates over the nature of race relations, minority rights, multiculturalism, multi-faith relations, and immigration. At the same time they provide new types of challenges to global security, since religious diaspora communities and ethnic or religious non-state actors – in a variety of religious traditions – have been able to pursue some of their political objectives through terrorism and funding of religious extremism. In addition to dealing with immediate terrorist threats the long-term challenge for governments in a global era is to take more seriously the way the politics of religious diversity, and the politics of religious freedom and toleration intersect with other foreign policy goals – promoting democracy, human rights, and economic development. Another challenge is to transform religious diversity into a resource for their foreign policies. Faith-based and multi-track diplomacy, and faith-based approaches to foreign aid and development, since they make use of NGOs, civil society, and religious communities and institutions, rather than merely links between governments, opens up new opportunities for a country's ethnic and religious minorities to more actively contribute to their country's foreign policy and to global security.