

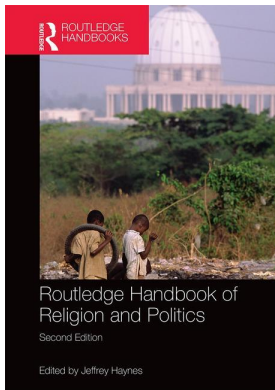
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Jeffrey Haynes

### **Religions in a globalizing world**

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RELIGIONS IN A  
GLOBALIZING WORLD*David Wessels*

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**Introduction and overview**

Religions are found wherever and whenever people inhabit our world. In the globalizing world of the twenty-first century, these religions naturally are intertwined with the diverse political trends of our age.<sup>1</sup> From time immemorial, this has been the mark of civilizations, empires, nations, the modern state, indeed of the human condition as such. Among the challenges of global politics, issues of order, governance, and multiculturalism in a world of diverse economic and social realities are never far from religions. As cultures meet, religions act and interact within core areas, along adjoining borders, and in far-flung diasporas. The encounter between religion and globalization is a crucial feature of our world. In the globalizing transformation that is occurring, religion is basic for the understanding of many of today's outstanding political issues: democratization, emancipation, terrorism, fundamentalisms. Calls for tolerance and reconciliation amid a rise in the prominence of public religion are heard within states and nations, in civil society and transnational relations, in traditional diplomacy and new global fora. Overarching aspects of international relations such as sovereignty and the structure of the international system have been intertwined with religions throughout history up to the present. Likewise, religions are molded by their political surroundings, locally and globally.

This intersection of religion and politics in a globalizing world is the core of much human activity and a key to understanding global dynamics. It is not a new intersection, for many constitutive ideas and patterns are related to elements that can be traced back over decades, centuries, or even millennia. The character and range of civilizations, empires, and political (or international) orders whose institutions date back to the dawn of human history vary according to time and place. Early human civilizations, great empires, ancient Greek city-states, evolving international orders, and modern globalization reflect both political and religious conditions of their time and place. In our own day, new interactions and possibilities for this mutual relationship are emerging.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, the tendency of many approaches to the subject has been to reduce religion to politics or vice versa: the question simply becomes the direction of influence (of religion on politics or vice versa) in an explanatory model. Instead of just asking how religions affect politics or politics affects religions, practitioners and analysts need to reconsider both together in their mutual relations as fundamental features of the lives of individual persons and whole

communities that converge and diverge in many ways without just adding one or another variable to an already overcrowded political theory. Religions can be sources of conflicts, but also of meaning and human capacity. Politics can bring people together or tear them apart. Religion is not some kind of ideological view of politics; global politics is not some kind of rival for the hearts of the religious faithful. Media images of international conflicts and extremist violence, juxtaposed with religious claims by the perpetrators of those actions, are merely a conflation of human dramas rather than a considered perception of how politics and religion mingle. In a globalizing world, religions converge with politics in the human person, the public square, and the world as a whole.

One shorthand for the understanding of global politics may be found in the way political leaders describe that world or prescribe for it. For example, in November 1990 in Paris, leaders of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) formulated what they called the Charter of Paris for a New Europe,<sup>3</sup> a document which sought to give direction to the changing political and economic realities of Europe at that time of monumental transition when tensions between the military blocs had eased and prospects for a more peaceful future based on common values looked good. Among the Charter's principal points were the emphases on democracy, human rights, and economic liberty (market economics) as European, if not global, standards for the conduct of public life in the aftermath of the changes symbolized by the year 1989. After decades of mutual threats, implacable opposition in ideological convictions, and rivalries and conflicts that extended to all corners of the globe, the participants in the CSCE began to envision and discourse about something new. Among the themes of the 1990 CSCE meeting, for example, democracy can be contrasted with various forms of authoritarianism and totalitarianism; human rights can be identified with evolving norms based on the key understanding of the dignity of the human person; and free markets demonstrably differ from command-style political-economic systems.

Today's condition has been described by different analysts by terms such as modernity, a new international order, a new world order, or globalization. Not only the CSCE, but other social and political movements offer approaches to contemporary political, economic, social, and cultural realities. These are all aspects of the globalizing world with which particular religions interact. Politics in this globalizing world includes the practices and discourses that have affected the course of international relations in the late-twentieth into the twenty-first centuries, although it is clearly not limited to such a brief time span.

The struggles for democratic freedoms and human rights that continue in our world and even anti-globalization movements such as the Occupy movement that have arisen in many places show that global politics remains a contested sphere of thought and action. I will not try to examine all of these cases and issues here. Rather, I will focus on particular religions as a correlative concept that can shed new light on the dynamics of our globalizing world. I will offer a basic stance on religion and politics together that can provide a more integrated understanding of global politics and particular religions than examining either concept alone could yield.

I also wish to call attention to the term "particular religions." Some might consider the term a pleonasm: of course, all religions are particular. Especially in the context of long-term trends in global politics, the overlap between the spheres of politics and religion in customs, symbols, and even social or hierarchical groups, has been seen throughout the world. Insofar as "religion" is regarded as a Westphalian invention<sup>4</sup> that differentiates the religious from the secular sphere of human activity, religion is assigned to a merely private role, while politics encompasses the public sphere. But many see the present as a post-secular and a post-Westphalian moment, an opportunity to recognize that religions have spread widely across the globe for

millennia. Some religions have aspirations toward or self-understandings as universal faiths for all people and peoples; and all manifest particular features of language, rituals, and other expressions in diverse lands.

To relate particular religions to global politics need not mean that religions have a limited geographical scope while today's politics is worldwide. On the one hand, religions are specific in terms of teachings, rituals, even communities. On the other hand, as the well-known American politician Tip O'Neill was wont to say, "all politics is local," too. Likewise, in global studies today, scholars struggle to identify new concepts and have offered neologisms in phrases like "glocalization" and "think globally, act locally." This attention to the global and the local is found in the study of both religions and politics. Past and present world civilizations and contemporary global dynamics provide abundant evidence that particular religions demonstrate a capacity to spread over the face of the globe, forming inclusive groups of believers that overcome barriers of language, ethnicity, and life styles. Similarly, the standard focus on international politics is expanding to a global viewpoint.

What these preliminary remarks suggest is that religions in our globalizing world have points of both convergence and divergence with politics. As the world is buffeted by events such as the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the turmoil ensuing after the Arab Spring from 2011, the complementarity of global politics and particular religions becomes apparent. Can we approach this complementarity by analyzing religions in a globalizing world with an integrated theory that includes or bridges two spheres that have often been intentionally separated?

Numerous scholars have urged a renewal of attention to religions in international relations and global politics.<sup>5</sup> One point frequently mentioned is the tendency to regard religion as a relevant subject merely because of its association with violent events in the world. After the Cold War, ethnic conflicts in many parts of the world have had a religious tinge. While each conflict has had unique elements, attention has been drawn to common aspects of a religious character.<sup>6</sup> The dramatic terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, became associated with religious images: the terrorists themselves imagined their motives and behavior as religiously inspired; afterwards, governments, scholars, and the general public have tried to understand religions better to deal with the issues raised by terrorism. While questions of conflict and violence certainly need to be addressed, my purpose in this chapter is to offer a broader view of particular religions in a globalizing world.

In the aftermath of the Cold War, Samuel Huntington's thesis on the clash of civilizations (with religious overtones) has been widely discussed.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, there is a long history of associating civilizations with religions.<sup>8</sup> Recent scholarship in international relations has revived discussion of civilizations<sup>9</sup> and international orders<sup>10</sup> in the global transformation<sup>11</sup> that is changing world politics. I would argue that the links between religions and broad political congeries like civilizations, empires, and international systems are diverse, and need not be understood as confrontational or prone to violence.

Among the approaches to a re-evaluation of the relationship between religion and international politics are the following. The work of Scott M. Thomas offers a normative perspective particularly influenced by the rich philosophical insights of Alasdair MacIntyre and Rene Girard. He also identifies the diverse settings throughout the world in which religious roots offer a useful foundation for empirical analysis.<sup>12</sup> Eric O. Hanson offers a new paradigm that sees international relations as the set of overlapping political, economic, military, and communication systems. Within that paradigm, political and religious perspectives take on powerful independent significance, and lead to a rich appreciation of the various settings of interaction between religion and politics worldwide.<sup>13</sup> Jeff Haynes takes a more comparative perspective

as he shows the vigor of the religion–politics dialectic in regions, countries, and religions all over the globe.<sup>14</sup> R. Scott Appleby illustrates the “ambivalence of the sacred” for both violence and reconciliation.<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth Hurd<sup>16</sup> identifies the settlements made between religions and politics throughout history, especially in the light of so-called “secularism.”<sup>17</sup>

The familiar language of social science usually poses questions about the direction of influence or causation. Does politics coerce religion, or does religion manipulate politics in diverse settings? In subtler ways, do politicians (cynically or otherwise) use the language and symbols of religion to achieve their political agenda? Do people of religion (benevolently or malevolently) cross a border between their legitimate concerns and the arena of politics? Of course, to state these issues is to differentiate the spheres of politics and religion in an analytical way that would be unfamiliar to many people and peoples, past and present, in historic civilizations or the contemporary world. It is also to seek explanations for the behavior of people in their motives, intentions, and goals.

Especially when this kind of analysis draws attention to murky realms of exploitation or violence, to conflict rather than cooperation, it exposes the uncomfortable reality that both politics and religion may fail in achieving the high values that they propose. Politics may be said to have concern for the common good or public goods, but may in fact be perverted to negative purposes like racial prejudice, exclusionary practices, even genocide. Religions, too, may assert lofty ideals of human dignity but end up pursuing their own exclusive advantages against others. This crucible of imperfection has been well expressed in R. Scott Appleby’s apt phrase concerning religion: “the ambivalence of the sacred.”<sup>18</sup> It could also be applied to the political world as a kind of “ambivalence of the commonwealth.” While both religions and politics often proclaim good will and peace, people acting in the name of one or the other frequently achieve only strife and suffering.

Both religion and politics have had to grapple with problems for which there is no clear dividing line between the two, such as moral issues. The issues vary according to time, place, culture, and so on, but commonly include such contested questions as the following: war, use of force, social justice, death penalty, abortion, marriage, biotechnology, freedom of expression, freedom of religion, freedom to convert from one religion to another. In contemporary politics and global politics, these matters all have ethical and legal dimensions that cannot be separated and to which political institutions address themselves. Likewise, religions stake claims to both their competence and their responsibility in treating these cases. It is not surprising when persons purporting to speak either for political or for religious communities deal with these issues or disagree about them. A few examples follow.

In the long history of global politics, concepts of the just war have been used for centuries to address the many moral and legal problems surrounding the use of military force and combat. The formulation and use of just war concepts offer strong evidence that the realms of religion and politics should and can be treated together. The lives of individual persons and whole communities are at stake in the conduct of war, and so it is to be expected that such “ultimate” questions blur any analytical boundaries that might be suggested for separating religion and politics. The way in which these moral criteria have established the basis for the international law of war demonstrates the intimate link between (religiously based) ethical thought and (politically based) positive law.<sup>19</sup> Similar criteria are used in the recent development of the concept of the responsibility to protect.<sup>20</sup> Likewise, the difficult moral and legal questions surrounding the freedom of religion illustrate how religions and politics are intertwined; tolerance as a “global standard” is a specific way in which this has taken concrete form.<sup>21</sup> More generally, religious thought and institutions have played an important role in the background to and emergence of international human rights.<sup>22</sup>

For decades if not centuries, sociologists have been examining a “traditional-modern” distinction in the structures of societies. Without going into that discussion in any detail, it is noteworthy that a widespread assumption in this approach has been that modern societies were experiencing “secularization.” That is to say, as the patterns of traditional societies gave way to the modern, religions or religious patterns that had been crucial to the character of those societies would change, in many cases to be replaced by secular or non-religious patterns. For some, it meant particularly the privatization of religion, with individual piety replacing group or external expressions of religious identity. Much has been written about the evidence found throughout the world in recent decades that falsifies such assumptions or hypotheses. Peter Berger is a prominent advocate of a reversal in the academic forum to a new concept of “desecularization.”<sup>23</sup> This empirical hypothesis is of great significance for this present study of global politics and particular religions because it draws attention to societal aspects of religion prominent today.<sup>24</sup> Religions are not some kind of second cousin to a hegemonic political or social theory, much less an epiphenomenon to underlying economic trends. Religions with a public expression are central to an understanding of politics, locally and globally, today as always.

Another sociological approach with an historical element is associated with the theme of globalization. If classical studies of modern societies discovered secularizing trends in nation-states, recent evaluations of trends perceive globalization or globalizing tendencies that are rooted in religion.<sup>25</sup> As observer-participants people today experience and reflect upon what amounts to elements of a global culture. This reflexive consciousness both enables and restricts people at a global level.<sup>26</sup> The inclusive or holistic character of this global identity has a religious quality with a variety of expressions. Public religion, a theme to which I will return later in this chapter, is a vigorous expression of this globalization.<sup>27</sup>

On the one hand, these social trends have led to speculation about the possibility of some sort of religious convergence, meta-religion (for example, based on environmentalism), or supra-religious ethic<sup>28</sup> that would provide a basis for people to co-exist in a global world. On the other hand, identifying the *modus operandi* of various religions by the vocabulary of contemporary international relations, these religions can be seen to have a “global” or “transnational” character, as Juergensmeyer states:

In these traditions [Islam, Christianity, Buddhism], the very core of their faith includes the notion that their religion is greater than any local group and cannot be confined to the cultural boundaries of any particular region. These are religious traditions with universal pretensions and global ambitions. . . . These are transnational religions, religions of expansion. But they also have geographic and cultural roots.<sup>29</sup>

Religions that encounter today’s globalization engage this phenomenon with the resources that they have always had and with the challenges that are implied by the global scope of today’s social boundaries. Robertson even suggests that some “anti-globalism” grows out of opposition to “secular humanism.”<sup>30</sup> The religious rhetoric of extremist groups like al Qaeda and the Islamic State would support this view.

Another approach to the modern encounter between religion and the human and social sciences is exemplified in the vocabulary of “spirituality.” This reflects several trends in contemporary religiosity. For example, on balance this language emphasizes spiritual experience over institutional forms. To some extent, Hanson’s category of “meditative experience” captures this point.<sup>31</sup> A more thorough attempt to integrate the perspective of spirituality with the findings of modern psychology and epistemology is that of Daniel Helminiak, who offers a critique of any spirituality that rests on logical contradictions or on propositions that are not based on

true understanding.<sup>32</sup> While noting this dimension of interiority or immanence in religious experience, I will focus in this chapter on the social and public aspects of global politics and particular religions.

### Cases: problems and issues

I will now begin a discussion of some of the more substantive problems and issues that link global politics and particular religions. At the risk of conflating different things into a single package or of disappointing analysts who are looking for unidirectional influences, I will try to demonstrate the interconnectedness of the political and the religious realms. I have no pretensions of offering a complete survey of the field, but I will try to cover some of the prominent empirical and normative questions that have arisen in recent decades.

Building on the Peace of Augsburg's 1555 formula of *cujus regio ejus religio*, the Westphalian settlement of 1648, taken at face value, seems to enshrine an ideal-type of international political system of independent sovereign states. This formula seems to suggest that states will form along confessional religious lines, or at least that adherence to or deviations from religious confessions are not a matter for co-religionists in other states or for those who follow other religions elsewhere. Of course, that ideal-type was not realized in practice.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, the system actually fostered some elements of secularism.<sup>34</sup> In any case, the international order based on states that gradually emerged has different religious foundations from earlier orders such as Christendom or the Chinese Middle Kingdom.<sup>35</sup> Moral, religious, political, and legal arguments have since highlighted the value of toleration of religious beliefs<sup>36</sup> within states as a primary basis for the legitimacy of those polities, although there are wide differences in the political and social levels of religious tolerance in states throughout the world.<sup>37</sup>

Religions constantly developed over the intervening centuries, as well.<sup>38</sup> However incomplete or imperfect these movements may be, ecumenism within Christianity since the twentieth century and religious dialogues—at least among representatives of major world religions—since the Chicago Parliament of World Religions in 1893 have suggested a softer encounter among religionists than a hard shell reinforced by state boundaries. Of course, the religious bodies in question never conformed entirely to the straitjackets of political exclusivity suggested by the Augsburg norm. And migrations in the modern and contemporary world make patently absurd any notion that religions could be or would be confined territorially.

All religions grow and spread by forms of witness, acceptance, and conversion. Formal and informal missionary thrusts are a characteristic of the major globe-spanning religious movements. Religious thought and practice have disseminated through many media of communication, for example the printed pamphlets and books of the Reformation and the radio, television, and digital media of recent decades. Perennial adaptations and indigenization of universally oriented religions are not new in themselves; but today it needs to be emphasized that these religious thrusts constitute the stuff of modern globalization as much as the working of a market system, the structures of nation-states, or the use of technology.

Specifically for this study of particular religions in a globalizing world, it is noteworthy that state sovereignty as a basis for the structure of the international system is under strain today from the forces of globalization. The growth of a global community that encompasses many inter-governmental and non-governmental institutions is a prominent fact of recent history.<sup>39</sup> New kinds of networks are spanning the globe, directly and indirectly transforming the way international politics is conducted.<sup>40</sup> In particular, norms of human rights raise direct challenges to the most cherished norms of state sovereignty.<sup>41</sup> Religions are especially important in this transformation; in the words of Daniel Philpott, "Religious freedom embodies the moral

challenge of an international system that is beginning to move past Westphalia.<sup>42</sup> Religion has never been comfortable with sovereign borders, and particular religions follow dynamic paths that disregard those borders even as they are affected by many specific political conditions that they encounter locally and globally.

Diplomacy is a traditional institution of international politics that shows evidence of being affected by religions. Of course the unique position of the Holy See (the Vatican) in contemporary diplomatic practice is evident from both the large number of states (178 as of March 2015) with which it maintains day-to-day diplomatic relations and from the symbolism surrounding papal visits with political overtones (e.g., papal addresses at the United Nations, Pope John Paul II's visits to Poland, and Pope Francis's address to the United States Congress in 2015). This influence extends to pastoral travels to various regions, the visits of heads of state to the Vatican, and rites such as the funeral of Pope John Paul II. Faith-based diplomacy<sup>43</sup> has attracted attention as both a necessary ingredient of state-to-state practice<sup>44</sup> and a privileged form of track-two diplomatic efforts.<sup>45</sup>

More broadly religionists have taken prominent roles in social and political reconciliation efforts throughout the globe, within national societies, and across national divides. Prominent examples include the peace and reconciliation encounters between Israelis and Palestinians, between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, among racial groups in South Africa, and in Central America, and numerous other dialogues and truth commissions. The Vatican's role in brokering a breakthrough in relations between the United States and Cuba in 2015 is a prominent example. One survey of the role of religion in global politics illustrates the broad range of interactions found today.<sup>46</sup>

A great variety is evident in the patterns linking religions and democracy.<sup>47</sup> One neuralgic point is the vexing problem of societies with exclusionary religious extremists. The word fundamentalism has been associated with such extremist movements frequently, but not always with beneficial results for intellectual clarity or social harmony.<sup>48</sup> The core of the problem is how freely a political-religious ideology that takes power through democratic processes of majority politics may impose its will on the wider society and polity. The normative question here can be resolved by attention to human rights, particularly those related to religious freedom and toleration. But empirically the procedural democratic principle of majority rule has been in tension with such principles of rights, as in countries like Algeria, Turkey, Egypt, Iran, and India. In a country like Afghanistan, with an Islamic identity and a history of foreign intervention, the question of imposing democratic political norms is even more complex.

In a comprehensive document like the Charter of Paris, the norm of democracy was balanced with an affirmation of substantive human rights norms that blend with liberal democracy. But the workings of democratic politics, and especially electoral politics, in countries as diverse as Indonesia, Pakistan, Nigeria, Israel, and Russia show the fragility of societal and religious security where religious tolerance fails. The Pew Research Center has been charting trends in social hostilities involving religion and government restrictions on religion for many years. In its 2015 report based on 2013 data, they reported that there were very high levels of both social hostilities and government restrictions in 27 percent of the 198 countries and territories surveyed.<sup>49</sup> The fact that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations affirms religious freedom and that most national constitutions and laws acknowledge the same would seem to be the basis for consensual global politics on this matter. But religious freedom is actually violated by political authorities in many places, often with severe persecutions.<sup>50</sup> The tension of the principle of religious freedom with democracy and with the actual social and religious conditions in various places is not necessarily a problem of religious doctrine or legal status, but of political and economic conditions and popular beliefs.



This brings the discussion back to the issue of public religion that I introduced above. Explicitly religious symbols and values have become more prominent in international and domestic politics even as global politics has emerged as a reality. For example, France's *laïcité*, Turkey's political developments, and India's secular constitution co-exist uneasily with contemporary desecularization and identity politics on a broad scale. Whether or when men should wear a fez cap, women a *chador* veil, or children a crucifix in school have become public issues that are not merely social in a narrow sense of that word but political in a wide sense. Issues such as the imposition of *sharia* law or the representation and expression of religion by various forms of public displays have stirred deep emotions globally. While the expressions of religious sentiment are specific to various religions, these issues are no less problems for particular religions than they are for global politics. The particular religions are faced with the question of what they need to do to express themselves and to relate to others in a globalizing world. That is, the religions themselves face questions of self-identity as well as questions of their relationship to politics.

This raises the question of the self-definition of various religions and the degree of uniformity or unity found in them. I would suggest four elements for a working definition of religion: creed (the profession of faith, including doctrine), morality (the ethical dimension of faith in lived behavior), worship (expressing the believer's notice of and relation to the divine or transcendent), community (the human solidarity involved in a common faith). Clearly, all religions show a range of practices on all four of these dimensions, both diachronically and synchronically, and from esoteric to popular forms. Cultures of diverse regions influence the public expressions of all of the more universal religions, an issue that today is often referred to as indigenization. But even religions that are relatively localized in their spread necessarily face similar boundary questions.

What political analysts call public policy also overlaps with religions, with each influencing the other. Everything from public holidays to legal codes, from family life to public associations, bears the imprint of this overlap. If "modern" societies show a greater differentiation of religion and politics than "traditional" ones, neither fits an ideal-type of division suggested by a term like "separation of church and state." One could speak of religion and politics as integral parts of a brocade fabric, or of the degree of autonomy experienced by religious or political institutions relative to each other. The ascendancy of theories of functionalism (and the differentiation that is said to accompany them) has obscured dimensions of organic unity between politics and religion.

Historically, there has been constant adjustment in various parts of the world in the processes and results of interactions between religions and politics. As Don Baker suggests: "In traditional East Asia, there was no word for religion as a separate and distinct sphere of life."<sup>51</sup> When this region was faced with new realities in the late nineteenth century, the Chinese character translation for religion (宗教) that was coined in Japan became the standard for the East Asian region. The Japanese government then claimed that a legitimate religion "had to have a doctrinal and scriptural base, had to be limited (i.e., sectarian) rather than all-encompassing in its membership, and had to extend beyond the boundaries of one nation."<sup>52</sup> The effort to define "religion" in public policy illustrates the complexities and dangers involved in differentiating the religious and political spheres.

Public policy today faces the challenge of allowing mobilized believers to express themselves freely while respecting others' freedoms. This tension is different from the conflicts in societies or in global encounters that are essentially about land, wealth, knowledge, and so on. These tensions or conflicts are accompanied by behaviors ranging from cooperation to force, violence, or military confrontation. Due to customs, prejudices, or patterns of exploitation,

such conflicts are sometimes regarded as religious, and may actually be reinforced by religious communities, while they may be essentially different. For example, intra-religion problems associated with the Hindu caste system, interpretations of Islam, or disparate Christian churches often have historical and social roots that are not merely religious. Similarly, inter-religion problems, for example about sovereignty over Jerusalem or about autonomy or devolution in various regions, may revolve around land, resources, and so on. The policies adopted to deal with such problems must acknowledge religious values and safeguard other human and community values, as well.

This brings our discussion to questions of what those common values might be or how they might be expressed in a common language of religion and politics. These are questions of discourse, narrative, and practice. Some effects of technology in a globalizing world have been toward the atomizing of individuals. Globalization seems to have a universalizing or homogenizing effect on cultures, with impact on everything from language and aesthetics to foods and building materials. But simultaneously, many religions have engaged globalization with renewed awareness of their own particular public character. Rather than seeing particular religions and global politics as somehow veering toward a clash or going off on unrelated tangents, I will try to examine them together in a unified stance of convergence and divergence.

### **From cases to theory: convergence and divergence**

A coherent, unified stance on religion and politics has several aspects. The verbal and other physical behaviors of those engaged in religion and/or politics are the first aspect. People discourse about moral norms for societies, engage in religious observances, participate in elections, choose public policies, and so on. While some analysts speak of several “identities” of people, I think that it is more accurate to speak of persons with their potentialities, limitations, and capacities. They are enabled by those personal and cultural capacities—and their religious and political commitments—to say and do whatever their concrete actions are. Categories like “Buddhist” or “liberal democrat” or “capitalist” or whatever ultimately capture only part of what these persons are.

The specific aspect of discourse is central to this study. This refers to both the discourse(s) of the people whom we regard as “speaking” politics and religion and the discourse and the narratives that we select to talk about them. We all use words to bundle our actions; and, of course, our words are themselves significant and meaningful human actions. We may not like it when Osama bin Laden uses the language of jihad to characterize suicide and terrorism or the Islamic State group expresses its political ambitions with the word caliphate, but we don’t ignore it. Justifications for armed intervention or drone strikes may not convince us, but we evaluate them by our religious and political standards. Especially in a “scientific” discourse, we try to specify, for example, what “just war” or “legitimate defense” might mean, and use such categories for empirical or normative analysis.

Our theories, then, aim to be relevant to what people are actually doing and saying, and to have a meaning that clarifies rather than distorts those actions and words. A theory that is supposed to elucidate politics or religions takes on the task of synthesizing religions and politics as never before. In what follows, I will offer some directions for a framework in which to understand both. The questions that I am posing include this fundamental aspect of theory construction. Can religion and politics be viewed together after we make all the distinctions that articulate their special characteristics? Does the reality of public religion require a new theoretical discourse about politics? Has global politics changed the way religions are lived or

self-consciously perceived? What are the elements of a framework for an integrated theory of politics and religions in today's globalizing world?

I will begin with a discussion of some of the convergent aspects of religion and politics: common humanity; particular and universal; symbols and rituals; authority. Obviously, my explanation requires a certain level of abstraction and analogous thinking. However, I will not try to make an argument for a specific theory of knowledge or philosophy of science, which would distract from the immediate task.

To note that we share a common humanity that is a basis for convergent thinking about politics and religion may not seem such a remarkable statement, but it has important implications for the current inquiry. This is not a biologist's claim about the common characteristics of the human genome or Aristotle's recognition that politics and ethics are foundational human actions. In fact, there have been quite different understandings of what it means to be human among the various religions and political ideologies. Observing how people actually conduct politics or carry out religious practices gives us pause, as well. There is a great deal of exclusion that takes place in the name of politics and religion: drawing territorial boundaries; designating legal entitlements for certain groups; imagining political or religious communities; legitimizing religious participation. The claim of common humanity affirms that all humans share the basis for religious and political commitment and inclusion.

The claim of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 December 1948) is that there is an "inherent dignity" in all humans, and that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." Philosophers have discussed this claim and similar assertions of what our common humanity implies. It is an invitation to the reader to recognize in himself or herself, and in others, that human dignity is our common heritage. This simple statement is a useful starting point for our search for convergence between global politics and particular religions.

In political thought this affirmation of human dignity is most often associated with the foundations of human rights. A similar line of development is found from the historical arguments of Bartolomé de Las Casas regarding the native populations of the New World in the sixteenth century, through the claims for civil and political rights in Europe in succeeding centuries, and assertions of freedom of religion and conscience that became ever more specific. More recently the concept of human dignity penetrates political discourse on toleration, basic human needs, and human security. Despite ambiguities and divergence, religiously inspired reflection on these foundations helped to advance international human rights from the 1940s through the 1960s.<sup>53</sup> Religion and politics mix in both the theoretical foundation and the real-world applications of these principles.

A second convergence between global politics and particular religions is their relationship to the particular and the universal. These are relative terms that both point out a tension within the political and religious spheres and make a bridge between these different spheres of human activity. For example, in the study of international relations, the neologism "glocalization" (introduced above) attempts to specify empirical politics today as an interpenetration of the global (universal) and local (particular) spheres. Empirical religions, too, contain a living tension between their universal aspirations and the particular expressions in cultures and communities that have become more prominent today. For example, Joseph Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI) points to the "European" (particular) cultural features of Christianity within a dynamism of transcendence via cultural encounters (universal) that continues today.<sup>54</sup> Co-religionists historically maintained contacts and shared traditions, but the transformation of technologies of transport and communication in recent decades have made ideas like "world-church" or "networked diaspora" far more concrete to them today. Cultural and political forces

impact religious bodies in such a way that they allow or even require religions to both express themselves in local forms and forge global identities.

In the practical world of politics, the universality of political claims is regularly limited by boundaries of cities, states, or other group units; and so politics becomes particular. But whenever the political group asserts its legitimacy vis-à-vis individuals, it is staking a claim to a certain universality (this becomes mixed up with the modern European system's concepts of internal and external sovereignty). The political imagination can conjure up Stoic notions of cosmopolis, Kantian ideas of a world federation of states, Wallerstein's world-economy, a world state, or a global community as it stretches toward inclusiveness. Religious terminology has favored words like body, mother, home, or temple as analogues or metaphors of religious connectedness.

For both religions and political units there is a constant dialectic between their universal ideals and the particular ways that they are put into practice. I see this as a convergent axis for a theory that integrates these two spheres. For example, when we consider contemporary religion and politics, features of what has been called "religious nationalism"<sup>55</sup> become clearer by a critical application of this theoretical insight. Nationalism is a universal abstraction that is epitomized in numerous specific nation-based ideologies. When a nationalism is synergized with a religion, the combination is both powerful and potentially disruptive of the tension between the particular and the universal.

Symbols and rituals are a third kind of convergence between religion and politics. Some theologies lay great stress on the symbolic character of religion in general, and the external symbols and rituals of specific religions are among the prominent ways that observers differentiate them.<sup>56</sup> Less attention is given to analysis of political symbols and rituals, even though they are significant characteristics of political life.<sup>57</sup> The history of Confucian rites in East Asia is a powerful case of how important and how ambiguous these rituals have been.<sup>58</sup> As explained above, this region did not even have an overarching term for "religion" until its nineteenth-century encounter with the West, but was full of symbolic rituals that overlapped any distinction between religions and politics. Flags, anthems, parades, political rallies, and so on are general examples from the political world, while social and political titles, military uniforms, medals, ribbons, and so on are usually restricted to special persons or groups within the polity.

The mixture of the two kinds of symbols and rituals is found in religious ceremonies surrounding the inauguration of persons in political offices throughout the world, as well as the crowning of monarchs, even the *daij sai* at the accession of the Japanese *Tenn* (emperor). Perhaps the most extreme cases of this mixture have been in "religions of public life" (Hanson's term), or what might otherwise be called quasi-religions or religious ideologies. Imperial Rome and Confucian China stand as historical examples, while Nazism, Soviet Communism, Chinese Maoism, and the *juche* ideology of North Korea's Kim Il Sung are more recent cases. These illustrate how polities are held together and mobilized by careful manipulation of (quasi-)religious public symbols and rituals.

Political leaders or institutions will use existing religious symbols for their own purposes in many instances, from crusade and jihad to aggregating political parties and using soft-sell propaganda of all sorts to promote social, political, and economic policies. Symbols and rituals are crucial at a broad level of politics. Grand public buildings and monuments, displays of civic unity, observance of political traditions are all the stuff of politics as much as voting or legislating policies. It is useful, therefore, to analyze both global politics and particular religions from this perspective of symbols and rituals.

Of course, religions are commonly associated with the liturgies that they perform. These external signs of worship express the beliefs of religious adherents and contribute to the identity

of the religious community. This public, social character of the religions not infrequently overlaps with political roles. For example, the use of places of worship as locations of sanctuary and refuge for individuals and groups is found in many parts of the world. Churches, mosques, and other houses of liturgical worship have been used to reinforce and to resist political ideas. Even the Russian punk collective called Pussy Riot chose the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow to protest the Putin regime in 2012.<sup>59</sup>

This leads to a final point of convergence that I will consider: authority in its dimensions of persuasion and teaching. Both politics and religion are characterized by authority; without it the former degenerates into coercive force and the latter into autarchic or autonomous spiritual behavior. In fact, the two spheres have similar modes in their primary way of exercising authority, which I will call persuasion and teaching.

Legal and political theorists note that sanctions are an ultimate tool of positive political-legal systems, and that the coercive implementation of sanctions is claimed as legitimate. As the issues and norms become broader and more fundamental, however, these systems operate largely as processes of persuasion. By enhancing public understanding of conditions for effective and beneficial action, political leaders and legal norms establish the basis for long-term, widespread conformity with authoritative decisions.

Authority in religion has a similar manner of proceeding by persuasive teaching. Many kinds of religious authority are invoked—sacred texts, community traditions, pronouncements of individuals in hierarchical or charismatic roles, divine revelation, and so on—and taught to the faithful. This teaching needs to persuade if it is to be observed. And when it does persuade it establishes effective identities and patterns of behavior even for broad civilizations.

While noting the way that global politics and particular religions converge on these dimensions of common humanity, the particular and universal, symbols and rituals, and authority, I will also discuss some aspects in which they tend to diverge. Two aspects that seem particularly noteworthy are the standards that they follow and the matter of rule enforcement. By standard I do not mean some technical measure of uniformity (as is sometimes called “global standards”) but an existential criterion of personal and interpersonal meaning. The standard for global politics is legitimacy, while the standard for particular religions is their orthodoxy and orthopraxy.

Governments, states, international organizations and agencies, and so on require legitimacy to sustain themselves with a meaningful and acceptable identity. Legitimacy is a difficult political concept to define, but it is a kind of litmus test for any political actor or system. It is perhaps best understood by its absence: without legitimacy, politics does not function smoothly and the mark of authority (analyzed above) is lost.

Religions have a somewhat different existential criterion for their unity and continuity, which I will call orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Religions ordinarily have a great range of symbols, teachings, traditions, and so on from which they draw. But the phenomenon of fundamentalisms demonstrates that this range is tested by changing circumstances inside and outside the religion in question. Orthodoxy and orthopraxy establish boundaries for words and actions in these religions. If political illegitimacy implies a certain failure of the political unit in question, the unorthodox word or unacceptable practice of a given religious unit is rather a sign of a different identity and meaning and may eventuate in a new religion.

Another point of divergence concerns the matter of rule enforcement. A substantial degree of rule enforcement is characteristic of the polity. Actual polities have ranged from totalitarian governments to failed states, and they operate in contexts from political correctness to libertarian attitudes. Institutions and instruments of enforcement include police, administrative agencies, courts, and so on. Ultimately this may involve physical coercion, but the main point

here is that the enforcement is carried out to achieve the polity's own purposes or to maintain its very existence.

In the case of religions, the particular religious community may be a multi-ethnic or global body, or it may be characterized by particular language, territory, or other externals. In any case, rules enforce the behavior and boundaries of the community. Challenges may arise within the community traditions, as from fundamentalisms, schisms, and heresies; developments occur that transform some important features of the religion. The community is the locus of the particular religion, and it ultimately resolves issues of otherwise ambiguous boundaries and identities by a form of rule enforcement.

As we consider the points of convergence and divergence between particular religions and global politics, I would like to return briefly to issues related to categories like civilization, empires, and international order that I introduced at the beginning of this chapter. These categories are not easily bounded by geography, history, or even concept,<sup>60</sup> and thus help us to expand our horizons especially on politics, which are often bounded by the familiar modern state. I have used the terms "globalizing world" and "global politics" here to similarly expand a viewpoint that can be integrated into a related understanding of particular religions. Not only have religions suffused civilizations and empires, they need not be a source of civilizational divide leading to military clashes but rather a basis for capacity-building and fruitful encounters.<sup>61</sup>

### Conclusions and prospects

In this chapter, I have offered a framework for understanding religions in a globalizing world.<sup>62</sup> I have focused on the correspondences or mutual characteristics of global politics and particular religions, rather than examining one as a variable in a theory about the other. While my framework offers the foundation for a unified stance toward these two spheres, establishing a comprehensive theory will require continuing efforts.

I offer a summary of my argument in the form of the following Table 19.1. It presents a schematic framework for an integrated theory of global politics and particular religions, and suggests a basic stance for empirical and normative research in an era of public religion and global governance. Under the "Convergence" section of the Chart, the wavy line in the left-hand portion suggests the overlapping, convergent aspects between politics and religion. While the vocabulary used to specify these realms ordinarily differs, many commonalities abound. In the "Divergence" section, the straight line in the right-hand portion suggests that the two spheres do constitute different spheres of being and action even as they share common features.

Table 19.1 Global politics and particular religions: convergence and divergence

	<i>CONVERGENCE</i>				<i>DIVERGENCE</i>	
	<i>Common humanity</i>	<i>Particular and universal</i>	<i>Symbols and rituals</i>	<i>Authority</i>	<i>Standard</i>	<i>Rule enforcement</i>
Global politics	Human rights	Glocalization	Rites	Persuasion	Legitimacy	Polity
Particular religions	Inherent dignity	World Church	Liturgy	Teaching		

With reference to international politics in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, some have suggested the appearance of a “new medievalism.” With the structures of the Cold War crumbling and the emergence of new actors and movements in a range of international issues, this concept helped to illuminate the diversity of power centers and issue areas today by means of an historical analogy. A parallel idea relating more to the sociological literature could be used to suggest the links between religion and politics today. Perhaps concepts like “new traditionalism” or “new cohesion” could be used. The failures of classical modernization theory to understand religions adequately might be compared to the inability of international relations scholars to anticipate the end of the Cold War. Religion has a public character that these concepts illuminate. The *traditions* of religion constitute their enduring character even as they encounter a new globalizing dynamic. Politics and religion exhibit areas of overlap and convergence that remind us of conditions in historical cases in which *cohesion* was the norm prior to an analytical differentiation of the two spheres.

Indeed, among the concepts put forward recently to examine the kind of overlapping spheres that I have described, the term *public religion* has been particularly useful. While this phrase by itself may not give full weight to the dynamics of global politics, it has been elaborated within the context of the globalizing world that I have discussed. But the concept of public religion can be expanded beyond the field of the sociology of religion or even beyond sociology. I have tried to inform the term with a broader meaning by my discussion of areas of convergence and divergence between global politics and particular religions. Their converging aspects are common humanity, the particular and the universal, symbols and rituals, and authority. The divergent aspects discussed here are standard and rule enforcement.

The concepts and framework offered here address some of these limitations of familiar comparative and international theories of the modern world. But I would not describe them as a “postmodernism,” either. They do not reduce politics and religion to thought-games or functions, but they attend to the stories or discourses in religion and politics as congruent aspects of human activity and identity. Both are essentially human rather than artificial constructs. Cultural particularities and communitarian features abound. And yet this view of human beings is not restricted by the narrow features of jingoistic nationalisms, extremist exclusivities, or fanatic sectarianisms.

It is inevitable that there will be extensive discussion of institutions that embody the values and ideas of people and their times. I have tried to present this framework for an integrated theory of global politics and particular religions in such a way as to include institutions, both religious and political, but also to note the significance of personal human consciousness and identity. The concepts and values that help to open religious and political venues alike are those of tolerance and religious freedom. It goes without saying that our world has not entered a paradise or nirvana of perfect tolerance and freedom.

Attention to the long view of history provided by civilizations and international orders may help us understand today’s transformations. The study of religions in a globalizing world can enlighten the human road for today and tomorrow.

## Notes

- 1 This chapter is a revised version of the present author’s chapter in the first edition of the *Routledge Handbook of Religion and Politics* (see Wessels, “Religion and Globalization”).
- 2 Sandal and Fox, *Religion in International Relations*.
- 3 Lawson and Bertucci, *Encyclopedia of Human Rights*, 202–7.
- 4 Thomas, *Global Resurgence of Religion*.

- 5 As this *Routledge Handbook of Religion and Politics* shows, attention to the need to study religion in political science has grown in recent years, a phenomenon that I will not discuss at length here. Some relevant treatment of the question may be found in Philpott, 2002; “The Challenge of September 11”; and Sandal and Fox, *Religion in International Relations Theory*.
- 6 Juergensmeyer, *Global Religions*; “Religion: Politics, Power, Symbolism.”
- 7 Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations*.
- 8 Braudel, *History of Civilizations*; Quigley, *The Evolution of Civilizations*; McNeill, *World History*; Dawson, *Religion and Culture*.
- 9 Gong, *Standard of ‘Civilization’*; Suzuki, *Civilization and Empire*; Katzenstein, *Civilizations in World Politics*; Bettiza, “Civilizational Analysis.”
- 10 Philipps, *War, Religion, and Empire*.
- 11 Buzan and Lawson, *Global Transformation*.
- 12 Thomas, *Global Resurgence of Religion*.
- 13 Hanson, *Religion and Politics*.
- 14 Haynes, *Religion in Global Politics*.
- 15 Appleby, *Ambivalence of the Sacred*.
- 16 Hurd, *Politics of Secularism*.
- 17 My paper, “Religion and International Politics,” summarizes some of the models of interaction between religion and politics (Wessels, “Religion in International Politics”).
- 18 Appleby, *Ambivalence of the Sacred*.
- 19 Van der Vyver and Witte, *Legal Perspectives*; Witte and Van der Vyver, *Religious Perspectives*.
- 20 International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, *Responsibility to Protect*.
- 21 “Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief,” United Nations General Assembly Resolution 36/55 (25 November 1981); “Elimination of All Forms of Religious Intolerance,” United Nations General Assembly Resolution 48/128 (14 February 1994).
- 22 Hertzke, *Freeing God’s Children*; Moyn, *Last Utopia*.
- 23 Berger, *Desecularization of the World*.
- 24 “Postsecularism” is addressed in this volume by Luca Mavelli in Chapter 15.
- 25 Jenkins, *Next Christendom*.
- 26 Robertson, *Globalization*.
- 27 Casanova, *Public Religions*; Tsushiro, *Light and Shade*.
- 28 See, for example, Kung and Kuschel, *Global Ethic*.
- 29 Juergensmeyer, *New Cold War?*, p. 7.
- 30 Robertson, *Globalization*, p. 80.
- 31 Hanson, *Religion and Politics*.
- 32 Helmeniak, *Religion and Human Sciences*.
- 33 Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy*.
- 34 Hurd, “Political Authority of Secularism”; Hurd, *Politics of Secularism*.
- 35 Philipps, *War, Religion, and Empire*.
- 36 Zagorin, *Idea of Religious Toleration*.
- 37 Pew Research Center, “Latest Trends.”
- 38 Juergensmeyer, *Global Religions*.
- 39 Iriye, *Global Community*.
- 40 Keck and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders*.
- 41 Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty*; Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink, *Power of Human Rights*; Carlson and Owens, *Religion and International Politics*; Moyn, *Last Utopia*.
- 42 Philpott, “Religious Freedom,” p. 997.
- 43 Johnston and Sampson, *Religion, the Missing Dimension*; Johnston, *Faith-Based Diplomacy*.
- 44 Albright and Woodward, *Mighty and Almighty*.
- 45 Appleby’s book examines several cases of religiously based efforts by third parties in mediating conflicts (Appleby, *Ambivalence of the Sacred*); the Community of Sant’Egidio’s achievements are introduced in Leymarie, “Supporters of Peace.”



- 46 Toft, Philpott, and Shah, *God's Century*.
- 47 Diamond, Plattner, and Costopoulos, *World Religions and Democracy*.
- 48 Almond, Appleby, and Sivan, *Strong Religion*; Marty and Appleby, *Fundamentalism Project*.
- 49 Pew Research Center, "Latest Trends."
- 50 Philpott, "Religious Freedom."
- 51 Baker, "World Religions," p. 146.
- 52 *Ibid.*, p. 157.
- 53 Moyn, *The Last Utopia*.
- 54 Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, pp. 85ff., 183ff.
- 55 Juergensmeyer, *New Cold War*.
- 56 Dillistone, *Power of Symbols*.
- 57 Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power*.
- 58 De Bary, *Asian Values*.
- 59 Jager, "Pussy Riot's Punk Prayer."
- 60 Jackson, "How to Think."
- 61 Puchala, *Theory and History*, 133–42; Wessels, "Capacities for Global Politics."
- 62 While introducing some material here on civilizations and related themes in this chapter, my main focus has been on particular religions in today's globalizing world. Also, related to a discussion of civilizations, international orders, globalization, and so on, at the intersection of politics, religions, society, and history, modernity has been identified as a moniker for the contemporary political or social order (see Eisenstadt, *Comparative Civilizations*). Not wanting to expand the present study beyond its already broad range or to challenge the formidable task of differentiating or defining all of these terms, I have limited my terminology to the working definitions of global politics and particular religions.

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