

Religious Pluralism,
Globalization, and
World Politics

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I

Introduction: Religious Pluralism in World Affairs

Thomas Banchoff

To think religion and world politics is often to think violence. The attacks of September 11, 2001, suicide bombings in the Middle East, sectarian clashes in Kashmir, civil war in the Balkans, bloodshed in Nigeria and Indonesia—these are prominent associations. In these cases and others, links between religion and violence are not hard to find. Political commitments with divine sanction often brook no compromise. For fanatical religious minorities, violence for a higher cause has a ready-made justification. And members of the wider community who identify with the grievances of militants often lend their support, overt or tacit, to the use of force. Religion is never the sole cause of violence. It intersects in explosive ways with territorial disputes; unstable and oppressive institutions; economic and social inequalities; and ethnic, cultural, and linguistic divisions. But today as in previous eras, passionate religious identities and commitments have often served to exacerbate tensions and promote bloodshed.¹

Less visible, but no less significant, is the peaceful engagement of religious communities in contemporary world affairs. At a declaratory level, leaders drawn from the world's leading religious traditions—Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, and Buddhist—have long endorsed ideals of peace, human dignity, equality, freedom, and solidarity. Today, more than at any time in history, exponents of these and other traditions are promoting conflict resolution, human rights, and economic and social development in practice—within national borders but also across them. The Good Friday agreement

in Northern Ireland, the resolution of Mozambique's civil war, and support for the Millennium Development Goals—all provide examples of transnational religious engagement, not in isolation but through interaction with other religious and secular actors in state and society. Riding the wave of globalization, religious actors have deployed new communications technologies and invoked human rights norms to mobilize public support, reframe debates, and support winning political and policy coalitions. Peaceful engagement of this kind should not be confused with harmony. It can oppose different interests and ethics, generating competition and controversy. But it is nonviolent. Less likely to make the newspapers, it has a far-reaching, if underappreciated, impact.

This book examines the intersection of religious pluralism, globalization, and world politics from a variety of disciplinary and analytical perspectives. It brings together social and legal theorists, historians, political scientists, and practitioners to explore the contours of religious pluralism in world affairs across traditions, regions, and issue areas, including peacebuilding, transitional justice, economic development, and bioethics. Taken as a whole, the volume does not depict religion as inherently more peaceful than violent—either in theory or in practice. That long-running dispute will not be conclusively resolved one way or the other. Instead, the essays deepen our understanding of the constructive role played by religious actors in world affairs, in its various dimensions. The volume provides a broader overview of engagement in our post-September 11, 2001, world—one that can inform new, collaborative efforts to meet pressing global policy challenges.

The balance of this chapter sets out a working definition of religious pluralism in world affairs, discusses its relationship with globalization, and explores six of its related dimensions: fragile identity politics, strong ethical commitments, international-national-local linkages, interfaith and intrafaith dynamics, religious-secular interaction, and the centrality of the United States. The overview of these dimensions serves to introduce the individual essays, compare their arguments, and sketch the overall contours of religious pluralism, globalization, and world politics in the contemporary era.

Religious Pluralism in World Politics

“Religious pluralism” is a contested concept across national, political, and disciplinary contexts. In theology the term often suggests harmony, convergence, or compatibility across religious traditions—in opposition to religious exclusivism. In sociology, pluralism can refer to the diversity of different religious traditions within the same social or cultural space.² As deployed in this volume,

religious pluralism refers to patterns of peaceful interaction among diverse religious actors—individuals and groups who identify with and act out of particular religious traditions. Religious pluralism, in this definition, does not posit different religions on diverse paths to the same truth, as it does in some theological contexts. And the term implies more than the social and religious diversity explored in much sociological analysis. Religious pluralism is the interaction of religious actors with one another and with the society and the state around concrete cultural, social, economic, and political agendas. It denotes a politics that joins diverse communities with overlapping but distinctive ethics and interests. Such interaction may involve sharp conflict. But religious pluralism, as defined here, ends where violence begins.

This conception of religious pluralism maps best onto national democratic contexts. Where state institutions guarantee individual freedoms, majority rule, and constitutional order, the interaction of diverse religious communities is more likely to remain peaceful. Recourse to the sword to settle disputes is effectively outlawed. Religious conflict can be fierce and has the potential to erupt into civil disorder that threatens democratic stability. But day to day, a national democratic and constitutional order provides a framework for peaceful interaction within and across religious and secular communities. This has been the dominant experience of North Atlantic and other democracies for decades. Today, greater religious diversity and the growth of Muslim communities in Western Europe, in particular, are generating divisive controversies about how best to combine political and social cohesion with respect for minority rights. But with few exceptions, those controversies are playing out peacefully, through the push and pull of democratic politics.³

World politics is different. The absence of a sovereign authority at a global level makes religious pluralism a more fragile construct. Neither the United Nations nor the United States nor any group of states can impose the equivalent of a constitutional order or maintain a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence. Al-Qaeda's emergence and survival over the past decade make that clear. The weakness of many states and the persistence of autocracy across the globe also undermine religious pluralism in world affairs. Failed states cannot provide effective protection for religious minorities or transnational religious communities. Nor can they prevent religious differences from spilling over into bloodshed—as is evident in Iraq, Somalia, and elsewhere. At the same time, nondemocracies, while they may keep the peace and afford minorities some protection, will often favor some religious communities over others (as in Iran) or marginalize religion in the public sphere (as in China). Political conditions across much of the globe militate against national religious mobilization or transnational religious activity. Religious pluralism might therefore

appear a limited phenomenon in world politics, localized within established democracies—and challenged even there.

To see religious pluralism only within the democratic national context is to miss one of the most salient trends of the last two decades—the emergence of more agile transnational religious actors, including a global papacy, Evangelical networks, the Jewish Diaspora, and a panoply of organizations with roots in the Muslim world.⁴ Faith communities, which claim about four-fifths of humanity as adherents, have attained more organizational strength and transnational reach since the 1980s. They have not displaced secular states and international institutions as key actors in world affairs—nor are they likely to in the foreseeable future—but they have begun to interact more with one another and with secular forces within state and society across multiple issues.

For example, the Roman Catholic Church, the world's largest religious organization, with more than 1 billion members, has become a much more visible actor on the world stage since the 1980s. Long international in scope, the Church first took up global issues of peace, human rights, and development with the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). Under John Paul II (1978–2005), the papacy emerged as a force in international affairs, through personal diplomacy, clearly articulated policy positions, and growing engagement within UN institutions. Far from a monolith, the Church is home to a variety of religious orders (including the Society of Jesus) and lay organizations (including the Rome-based Community of Sant'Egidio) that have been particularly prominent in pursuit of peace and social justice agendas in Africa, Latin America, and around the world.⁵

Protestant and Orthodox churches, with combined adherents of just under 1 billion, have also increased their involvement in world affairs in recent decades. The World Council of Churches, founded in 1948, has grown in terms of membership to some 340 churches and has expanded its cultural, social, and political agenda and policy interaction with governments and international organizations. Evangelical Christianity has grown sharply in the developed and developing worlds. Widely associated with missionary activities and traditional values, Evangelical congregations have increasingly carved out policy stances on issues ranging from HIV/AIDS to global poverty to global warming. Since the fall of the Soviet empire in 1989–1991, Orthodox churches, too, have emerged as more independent political actors. Based in Russia, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East and linked to global diasporas, they have increased in size, strength, and visibility around issues including education and minority rights.⁶

Islam, the world's second-largest religion, with about 1.3 billion adherents, has also emerged as a more powerful transnational force. Islamic militants, and Al-Qaeda in particular, have commanded the most media attention.

But the vast majority of Muslims and Muslim organizations are committed to peaceful engagement in social and political affairs—and increasingly organized in their pursuit. The last two decades have seen the expansion of Muslim social movements and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and a much higher profile for the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). The OIC, founded in 1969, brings together fifty-seven countries with majority or significant minority Muslim populations to articulate shared positions on a range of global issues including, but going well beyond, ongoing conflicts in the Middle East. While Islam lacks any strong centralizing authority, and the OIC itself is not a religious actor in any narrow sense, Muslim voices have grown more prominent in world politics since the end of the cold war.⁷

The third of the Abrahamic traditions, Judaism, while small by comparison—a community of about 15 million worldwide—has a vital international role grounded in the strength of the state of Israel and the importance of the Jewish Diaspora. A regional power in military-territorial conflict with its neighbors, Israel is both a besieged Jewish state and a successful pluralist democracy. The Jewish Diaspora, anchored in the United States and Western Europe, has a robust transnational identity and organizational expressions, including the World Jewish Congress. It provides financial and political support for Israel and broader causes, including the Middle East peace, global economic and social development, and the struggle against anti-Semitism and all forms of racism.⁸

Hinduism, the world's third-largest religious community, while less geographically dispersed, is also a growing force in world affairs. With perhaps 800 million adherents, Hinduism is the least monolithic and most internally diverse of the world's major religious traditions. There is nothing even approaching an actor or organization that can speak for a tradition marked by a rich multitude of beliefs and practices. At the same time, however, Hindu nationalism—the political identification of Hinduism with the Indian nation—has been on the rise since the 1980s. While the media have focused on outbreaks of Hindu-Muslim violence, including the 2002 riots in Gujarat, the growth of the Hindu nationalist parties and civic associations and the rise of pan-Islamic sentiment among the country's 150 million or so Muslims mark a deeper transformation of political culture in India, one with far-reaching transnational and international implications, given the size of the Indian diaspora and the country's emergence as a world power.⁹

Buddhism, with about 400 million adherents, is also an internally diverse tradition with few authoritative organizations. Concentrated in varied forms across a range of Asian and Southeast Asian countries, Buddhism has long been engaged in politics, as historical interactions between monks and monarchies in Cambodia, Thailand, Burma, and elsewhere attest. For much of the twentieth

century, colonialism and its legacies, autocratic military rule, and Buddhism's own traditional concern with the enlightenment of the individual have limited political engagement around national and international issues. Over the last two decades, however, the global diplomacy of the Dalai Lama, the exiled spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism, and the "engaged Buddhism" of monks in Cambodia and Burma struggling for human rights and social justice have altered this picture. Transnational networks involving many Buddhists in North America and Europe have become more active around a host of global issues, ranging from the struggle for democracy in Asia to equitable social and economic development and climate change.¹⁰

This sketch of religious communities active in world affairs is far from comprehensive. Other traditions, including Sikhs and the Baha'i, play an important national and international role. Moreover, none of the five leading traditions outlined—the three Abrahamic faiths, Hinduism, and Buddhism—represents a single monolithic actor in world affairs, or anything approaching one. Particular religious actors should not be confused with whole religions that are internally diverse along lines of geography, class, race, ethnicity, and gender. With this caveat in mind, one can explore the increasing global role of religious actors, defined as individuals and groups who identify with and act out of religious traditions in the public sphere, nationally and internationally.

The Dual Impact of Globalization

What, if anything, is new about religious pluralism in world affairs? Religion has long had a transnational dimension. Major world religions have grown and changed as they have spread across borders, generating far-flung networks with varied regional and local expressions. The migration of Buddhism out of India and extended kinship ties within Judaism suggest there is nothing radically new about religion's transnational reach. Islam and Christianity, in particular, have long been global movements. During the Middle Ages and the early modern period, first Islam and then Christianity became an intercontinental force. Muslim expansion from the Middle East into North Africa and Europe and across much of South, Central, and Southeast Asia preceded the conquest of the New World and the spread of Christianity to the Americas, Africa, and parts of Asia centuries later. The frequent recourse to violence in this process of expansion and interaction, most notable in the initial Muslim conquests and the Crusades, might appear to draw a sharp line between religious dynamics in the past and religious pluralism today. In point of fact, the spread of religion by peaceful means, and the nonviolent coexistence of different traditions

characterized much of the world over long stretches of time. Medieval Spain and the Ottoman empire, for example, were marked by significant periods of peaceful coexistence among Muslims, Jews, and Christians.

If pluralism defined as peaceful interaction is not new in world affairs, neither is its political dimension—interaction that engages state power and issues of governance. Religious beliefs and practices, embodying certain understandings of right human conduct, inevitably intersect with questions about how power should be organized and exercised justly. Church-state struggle in Christian Europe and secular-religious interaction in the Muslim world, South Asia, and China constitute historical legacies of transnational political engagement. “Religion and politics have been tied together from the beginning,” Anthony Appiah reminds us in this volume. “Athens and Rome had state religions, cults of divinities with special importance for the city or the empire. Many places, from Pharaonic Egypt on, have had divine kingship. The major empires of Eurasia—Mongol, Mughal, Manchu, Roman, Ottoman, British—all took religion with them.” These political-religious dynamics continued into the modern imperial era. During the nineteenth century, John Voll points out in his essay, transnational religious engagement was evident in “missionary activity and the influence of religious organizations on early international advocacy campaigns like the one to abolish slavery.”

If contemporary international and political manifestations of religious pluralism are not completely unprecedented, they do mark a break with the post-1945 era. The growing salience of religion in international affairs contrasts sharply with the cold war’s four decades of secular and ideological superpower competition. In retrospect one can see the beginning of a shift in the late 1970s, with the Iranian revolution, the prominence of Evangelicals in U.S. politics, and the onset of John Paul II’s international papacy. With the collapse of the Soviet empire and the end of East-West ideological competition, transnational religious communities emerged more clearly as sources of identity and engagement in world affairs. The spread of Evangelical social and political movements in Latin America, Africa, and Asia attests to this dynamic, as do the rise in Muslim middle-class participation in politics and new crises at the intersection of the religious and the secular, such as the Muhammad cartoon controversy of early 2006 and reactions to Pope Benedict XVI’s remarks on Islam later that year. The media and the academy have focused on the violent campaigns of Al-Qaeda, the U.S.-led counteroffensive, sectarian violence in Iraq, and the Israeli-Palestinian struggle. But the reemergence of religious actors in world politics is part of a broader, predominantly peaceful trend.

The return of religion is not simply a result of the collapse of the postwar order and its secular, ideological frame of reference. It does not simply take

us back to an earlier era. While linked to long-established religious traditions, religious pluralism in world affairs is propelled forward by the contemporary dynamics of globalization. It is sometimes argued that globalization is neither new nor all-encompassing. By some measures, transnational flows of people, goods, and capital are comparable to the pre–World War I era. And by other measures, nation-states have gained, not lost, political and economic leverage in dealing with domestic and international forces.¹¹ But two dimensions of globalization are undeniably new: the near-instantaneous worldwide sharing of information through modern communications technology, and the global spread and institutionalization of the idea of universal human rights. One has connected and mobilized far-flung communities more effectively, while the other has enlarged the space for their cultural, social, and political engagement, both nationally and internationally.¹²

Since the 1980s the proliferation of telephone, fax, television, and Internet technologies has fostered the survival and growth of transnational religious networks and diaspora communities. With the papacy of John Paul II global media and personal diplomacy strengthened transnational Catholic identity and helped to unravel the Soviet empire in Eastern and Central Europe. Over the same period, radio and television were instrumental in the growth of Evangelical Christianity in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, and the associated spread of American-style individualism and consumer culture and a “Gospel of Prosperity.” Global travel and communications have strengthened ties among Jews inside and outside Israel and increased support for the Jewish state in the United States. And in the Islamic context, the Internet has proved a particularly powerful medium in the creation and contestation of transnational identities. Within Islam, inexpensive and instantaneous communications are forging virtual communities in the absence of transnational, hierarchical structures of authority. Here, Al-Qaeda is one example of a broader trend that is dominated by nonviolent Muslim groups, including the Gülen movement explored by Thomas Michel in his chapter.¹³

New communications technologies not only enable the creation and sustenance of transnational religious communities, thereby sustaining a high degree of religious pluralism in world politics, but also foster an internal diversification of religious traditions. The individualization of religious—or, better, spiritual—identities, a trend parallel to the expansion of global consumer culture, is a striking development of recent decades. Suspicion of religious authority and formal institutions, evident in public opinion polls and in some declines in attendance at religious services, is on the rise.¹⁴ The wavering strength of many mainline religious organizations, measured in terms of members and resources, is undeniable. At the same time, however, new and

reformed religious communities are thriving—including Evangelical groups that build on an individualized ethos and Muslim organizations that provide an anchor for identity within a churning world. A loose amalgam of faith-inspired groups, aligned with but not identical to larger religious communities, is emerging to meet the demand to translate spiritual and ethical values into social and political action in areas such as poverty relief, the HIV/AIDS crisis, and environmental protection. The same communications technologies that advance transnational mobilization, then, are promoting a high level of internal diversity and the reformulation of religious identities and ethical commitments at a global level.

The geographic extension and mobilization of religious communities through communications technologies also deepen their interaction with one another—in society, culture, and politics. And much of that interaction is competitive. “The impact of globalization on religious pluralism is most evident in that the quest for religious recognition and competition among religious groups has become truly global,” Pratap Mehta writes in this volume. “Transnational linkages of religious groups add to local competition and put a strain on local patterns of accommodation.” John Witte argues in his essay that we are seeing a “a new war for souls”—in the former Soviet Union, for example, where a revitalized Orthodoxy confronts Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam; in Latin America, where an entrenched Catholic Church faces inroads from Evangelicals; and in parts of Africa and Asia, where Christian and Muslim missionaries compete.¹⁵ This competition has a theological dimension; it is a confrontation among beliefs and practices. But it is also a political struggle, as different sides seek to mobilize state power, secure rights and resources for themselves, and restrict those of national and international rivals.

The existence of this (mainly) peaceful competition points up the salience of a second, legal-political dimension of globalization—the spread of democracy and the institutionalization of a global human rights regime. The conviction that all human beings possess an inherent dignity and equality, fundamental freedoms, and the right to democratic self-governance is more widespread today than at any time in history. It is evident at the level of global public opinion, where support for democracy and individual rights continues to grow. It finds expression in interfaith documents and initiatives, including the much-cited Declaration of the Parliament of the World’s Religions (1993). And it is set down in international declarations and legal instruments endorsed by the vast majority of the world’s governments, beginning with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). The international human rights regime, however fragmented and imperfect, creates a political space for the free exercise of religion, including the opportunity to organize and mobilize in the public sphere

around policy issues.¹⁶ Global norms of human dignity and human rights dovetail with the ethical commitments of majority or mainstream religious traditions. And they make it harder for governments to suppress or co-opt religious actors—local, national, and transnational. “The modern human rights revolution,” John Witte points out in his essay, “has helped to catalyze a great awakening of religion around the globe.” In regions now marked by democracy and human rights, “ancient faiths once driven underground by autocratic oppressors have sprung forth with new vigor.”

The emergent global human rights regime should not be confused with a constitutional order. In the absence of a global sovereign, there is no monopoly on the legitimate use of violence and no way routinely to punish human rights violations on the national model. Legal instruments including the Universal Declaration of 1948, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), and the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (1981) establish rights to have and manifest one’s religion. But they bind only their signatories. Some Muslim-majority countries, including Saudi Arabia, have refused to endorse certain of them. And most include clauses that permit exceptions under certain circumstances, such as threats to public order. Still, the growing body of human rights law does have considerable moral, and therefore practical, force. Governments often feel constrained to abide by declarations and treaties endorsed by the international community. Accusations of violations are met with efforts to explain and justify state actions. To flout international law is to risk political isolation, which entails political costs. It is likely, for example, that hard-liners in Russia and India would pursue tougher policies against Christian missionaries in the absence of a significant, if still fragmentary and contested, global human rights regime.

More than the abstract endorsement of human rights, the global trend toward democracy has created greater leeway for religious communities in national and international affairs. Where rights to religious freedom and practice are not just articulated but set down in constitutions and laws backed by effective state power, religious actors have more freedom of maneuver. The wave of democratization in Latin America that began in the 1980s loosened ties between the Catholic hierarchy and government officials in many countries, creating larger political openings for Evangelicals. New democracies in Central and Eastern Europe—and a more precarious democracy in Russia—created space for indigenous and outside religious communities to strengthen their positions. In Turkey, democratization has gone hand in hand with the rise of a moderate Muslim party and its successful transition into government. Similar dynamics are evident in parts of Africa and Asia. And in the Arab Middle East, limited trends toward economic and political liberalization have enabled

a growing educated, pious, and powerful middle class to engage more fully in civil society and public affairs. These trends are not universal. In Saudi Arabia, for example, non-Wahhabi Muslims face discrimination, and in Burma (Myanmar), the junta crushed the protests of Buddhist monks in late 2007. Globally, however, the pronounced trend toward democracy has enhanced opportunities for religious communities, both national and transnational, to organize and enter the public sphere.

Whether global levels of religiosity or spirituality are rising, declining, or steady in today's world is difficult, if not impossible, to determine. But the social and political expressions of religion have clearly increased overall, if unevenly, over the past several decades. Globalization's dual impact—through communications technologies and legal-political shifts—has facilitated the mobilization of religious communities, within and across countries, and their engagement at the level of society and the state. The essays in this volume explore those patterns of mobilization and engagement across regions, traditions, and issue areas. Together they point to six dimensions of religious pluralism in world affairs: fragile identity politics, strong ethical commitments, international-national-local linkages, interfaith and intrafaith dynamics, secular-religious interaction, and the centrality of the United States.

Fragile Identity Politics

Religious pluralism in world politics is an increasingly salient backdrop for national identity politics, defined as struggles over representation and recognition in multicultural contexts.¹⁷ Historically, where one religion has dominated a nation-state—or when an equally dominant secularist ideology has taken its place, as in parts of Western Europe—religious pluralism has not always proved divisive. The majority tradition, religious or secular, has determined the rules of the game and imprinted the national identity, the dominant norms and narratives that bind citizens to the state and one another. Today, transnational religious activity, carried by globalization, can generate perceived threats to national identity overlaid with emotional passion. Global flows of people and ideas unsettle majority traditions and create space for political challenges by minority communities that invoke human rights. The presence of growing Muslim minorities in Denmark and the Netherlands, for example, has generated sustained controversies about national identity in both countries. The perceived threat posed by an immigrant and transnational religious community has become an axis of conflict, enflaming passions around critical events, including the murder of filmmaker Theo van Gogh by a Muslim extremist in

the Netherlands in November 2004 and the publication of Muhammad cartoons in Denmark a year later.

In his essay, Anthony Appiah asks why domestic and international political disputes are so difficult to resolve once they have religious stakes. His answer centers on the centrality of religious identity and its role in integrating other aspects of personal identity, underwriting ethical commitments, and defining the national community. When it is a salient identity marker, religion is difficult to sacrifice or compromise. The political explosiveness of religious identity and national identity is heightened in a world where globalization is unsettling the latter. “Nationality—its meaning for each citizen—is the result of cultural work, not a natural and preexisting commonality,” Appiah writes. This creates “a place for the politics of national identity” in which it matters “very much how the nation is conceived, including religiously.” When the contestation of national identity is inflected by religious questions, as is increasingly the case in today’s world, a divisive identity politics can result. “Once you want your national identity to cohere with your religious identity,” Appiah notes, “you will aspire for its rituals to become national rituals, its morals to be embodied in law, its gods to be honored in public ceremonial.”

Mehta’s exploration of the Indian case illustrates these dynamics. About 80 percent of the country’s more than 1 billion citizens are classified as Hindus, but Hinduism itself is marked by incredible regional and ethnic diversity that encompasses a significant global diaspora. The country is also home to the third-largest Muslim population in the world (behind Indonesia and Pakistan) and has significant Christian and other religious communities that are part of wider global networks. The growth of Hindu nationalism, evident in the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party, is an assertion of a constructed Hindu national identity against perceived threats, external and internal, including the rising social and political engagement of a growing Muslim middle class, itself part of a global trend. Tensions are most evident in ethnic and religious violence in Kashmir on the Pakistani frontier and have flared up periodically, most recently in Gujarat in 2002, where hundreds of Hindus and Muslims were killed in communal bloodshed. India remains a success story—the world’s largest democracy managing religious difference in the context of globalization—but its religious pluralism goes hand in hand with a fragile identity politics.¹⁸

In their essays both Appiah and Mehta propose ways of managing religious pluralism. Neither suggests removing religion or religious claims from the public sphere. That recommendation, associated with John Rawls and other classic liberal theorists, flies in the face of the pervasive and inevitable intersection of religion and politics in today’s world. Appiah’s solution is to call for the cultivation of a cosmopolitan ethos centered on the dignity and freedom

of all human beings. Such an ethos, he argues, is best cultivated not against but within religious traditions. Dialogue between cosmopolitan adherents of different communities—those who read their traditions as compatible with human dignity, human freedom, and respect for the dignity and freedom of others—is the best way to manage religious diversity and avoid violence. Mehta makes a compatible institutional recommendation; he calls for a clear separation of religious identity from political *representation*. “A political order can give space for religious freedom of individuals,” he writes, “but if the political order is required to be representative of religious communities,” polarization and paralysis are the likely result. In the interest of political stability under religious pluralism, groups should “give up the aspiration that a political order will represent *them*, qua religious groups in some respect.” Mehta invokes the example of contemporary Iraq as a critical country wrestling with these issues.

Appiah and Mehta focus on the fragile politics of national identity. Jean Bethke Elshtain and John Witte, in their essays, address a related, and especially sensitive, issue at the intersection of religious pluralism and identity politics—international religious freedom and proselytism. The growth of missionary activity in the context of globalization, originating mainly in the United States and several other countries, including South Korea, and supported by worldwide communication networks, has sparked national, regional, and global reactions. “Beneath shiny constitutional veneers of religious freedom for all and unqualified ratification of international human rights instruments,” Witte writes, “several countries of late passed firm new antiproselytism laws, cult registration requirements, tightened visa controls, and various other discriminatory restrictions on new or newly arrived religions.” Anticonversion laws in Indian states directed against Southern Baptists, described by Mehta, are a prominent example, as are Russian regulations designed to protect the predominance of the Orthodox Church. Such conflicts between national and regional authorities, on the one hand, and transnational religious communities, on the other, are increasingly overlaid by international diplomacy. The U.S. International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, described by Elizabeth Prodromou in her essay, makes upholding religious liberty an avowed national foreign policy priority. Subsequent annual reports sponsored by the U.S. government have criticized China, Saudi Arabia, Russia, and other states for not living up to their obligations under international law—and often sparked critical and dismissive reactions.¹⁹

Where the exercise of religious freedom ends and inappropriate or illicit proselytism begins is a hotly contested international issue. Witte expresses overall support for the U.S. government position: “Religious expression inherent in proselytism is no more suspect than political, economic, artistic, or other forms of expression and should, at minimum, enjoy the same rights protection.” But

he also acknowledges the complexity of the issues raised by efforts at conversion and how, in some cases, they can threaten existing religious and political identities. International covenants reference not only the rights to freedom of expression but also rights to have and to hold one's own religious convictions. For Witte this encompasses the duty to "respect the religious dignity and autonomy of the other, and to expect the same respect for one's own dignity and autonomy." In light of these competing principles, he urges "all parties, especially foreign proselytizing groups, to negotiate and adopt voluntary codes of conduct of restraint and respect of the other." There is no legal basis or political imperative for the restriction of proselytism from sender countries, but transnational religious groups should recognize and respect anxieties in target countries, especially when they come in with superior material resources, and may be perceived as an extension of U.S. foreign policy. "Moratoria on proselytism might provide temporary relief," he concludes, "but moderation by proselytizers and proselytizees is the more enduring course."

Jean Bethke Elshtain is less concerned about negative national or international political fallout from proselytism. For her, freedom of religion and the freedom to proselytize are inseparable. For religious pluralism to be robust it must not just encompass religious diversity and interaction but also include efforts to knowingly and determinedly set out to change someone else's mind about something basic to his or her identity and self-definition. Drawing on Charles Taylor, Elshtain argues for a "deep pluralism" that includes the possibility of the transformation of the self and the other through dialogical encounter.²⁰ "Any strong articulation of a powerful religion or a powerful political position is going to make somebody somewhere uncomfortable," she maintains. Does opposition to proselytization "mean we are all reduced to bleating at one another across a vast distance?" For Elshtain that would be unacceptable. She acknowledges the power imbalances and mutual suspicions that accompany efforts to win converts through transnational activity. But she argues that to restrict proselytism, through mandatory or self-imposed measures, is to restrict free speech. Nothing should compromise open dialogue within and across traditions in a spirit of truth.

Religious pluralism, then, poses a double challenge for identity politics. Domestically, it can unsettle identification of the nation-state with the predominant religious or secular tradition. In the face of economic and cultural globalization—including penetration by new religious ideas and groups—majority traditions can strive for a closer identification of religious and national identity, with divisive political consequences. Internationally, states sometimes restrict transnational religious communities as perceived threats to national and local identities, effectively curtailing their presence and proselytizing activities. In the process they internationalize their national identity politics, with

consequences for international diplomacy—particularly as the world’s leading power, the United States, has made religious freedom an express foreign policy priority. These dynamics were illustrated in the 2006 controversy surrounding Abdul Rahman, a citizen of Afghanistan threatened with capital punishment for converting from Islam to Christianity. U.S. diplomatic pressure and judicial discretion ultimately led to Rahman’s release and forced emigration. But the case revealed explosive tensions between Afghanistan’s identity as an Islamic republic, on the one hand, and the principle of international religious freedom and its advancement by the United States, on the other.

Strong Ethical Commitments

A focus on identity politics highlights tensions at the intersection of religious pluralism and national and international politics—tensions that most often play out nonviolently through the push and pull of politics and diplomacy. Religion is more, however, than a powerful source of individual and collective identity. It also grounds strong ethical commitments that inform particular actions. For some radical minorities, open to the use of violence, the survival and strength of the community itself is the ethical good that trumps all others under all circumstances. But for the religious mainstream across the Abrahamic traditions, Hinduism, and Buddhism, other ethical commitments are also in play. The flourishing of the community is a positive good, but so are values of human freedom, equality, solidarity, and peace. Multiplying interfaith initiatives have pointed to ethical commonalities alongside theological differences, most notably the Declaration on a Global Ethic endorsed by participants in the Parliament of the World’s Religions in 1993. Ethical and not just theological questions continue to divide religious traditions, as ongoing controversies about the rights of women and homosexuals attest, but some convergence across a range of overlapping ethical commitments is undeniable.²¹

In the context of religious pluralism and globalization, the common ground increasingly extends from discourse to practice. Exploiting global communications and national and local trends toward greater respect for democracy and human rights, communities across traditions are grappling with core issues of conflict, human rights, and economic and social development. Leaders as diverse as the American Evangelical Rick Warren, Anglican archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa, and Egyptian preacher Amr Khaled are mobilizing faith communities in the face of policy challenges at home and abroad. Personal agendas and organizational interests certainly shape such engagement. But one should not downplay the psychological force and political effectiveness of

ethical commitments to peace, human dignity, and human equality grounded in particular religious traditions. Secular institutions such as national governments, the United Nations, and nonreligious NGOs share many of those same basic commitments. They often have more resources at their disposal and still play the predominant role in formulating and implementing policy. But they can rarely invoke embedded ethical traditions or appeal to particular communities as effectively as religious counterparts.

Conflict resolution is perhaps the most significant area of religious engagement. In his essay, Scott Appleby takes up the question of peacebuilding: the construction of a sustainable peace in societies divided or threatened by deadly conflict.²² He examines three cases spanning three religious traditions and three parts of the world: the Catholic lay movement of Sant'Egidio's engagement in Africa; Buddhist activism in support of human rights in Cambodia; and religious engagement in both Sunni and Shiite Muslims across the war-torn Middle East. An exploration of these cases points to the central role of core ethical convictions in driving the pursuit of peace. The experience of several decades, Appleby argues, shows that religious peacebuilding works through the agency of long-term actors dedicated to the (re)construction of civil society and the strengthening of relationships across ethnic and religious boundaries. Religious groups have also grown more adept at collaborating with secular actors—international organizations, governments, and NGOs—in advancing a peacebuilding agenda.

In their essay, Leslie Vinjamuri and Aaron Boesenecker take up a related issue at the intersection of peace and human rights: the achievement of transitional justice. Truth commissions, war crime trials, lustration, and amnesty are all strategies that states have pursued following regime transitions and civil wars.²³ Religious communities, local, national, and international, have been key players in efforts to break with an oppressive and violent past, in countries ranging from South Africa to East Timor. One distinguishing characteristic of such engagement has been a particular conception of justice anchored in religious ethics, in particular the emphasis placed on forgiveness and reconciliation. Differences in religious and secular approaches to transitional justice should not be overdrawn, Vinjamuri and Boesenecker argue. But a focus on dialogue and restorative justice—alongside and, in some cases in place of, traditional ways to punish evildoers—is a proven way to heal wounds in the wake of some divisive civil conflicts.

Thomas Michel, in his essay, draws our attention to the peacebuilding resources in the Muslim tradition, what he refers to as “Qur’anic pacifism.” Most media attention has centered on the activities of a violent Muslim minority; larger Islamic movements, dedicated to the principle of nonviolence, have

garnered much less of the spotlight. Michel examines three such movements in detail—their historical origins, ethical commitments, and social and political practices. Two of the movements, centered around the teachings of Said Nursi and Fethullah Gülen, have emphasized the importance of education, dialogue, and service to the poor as imperatives in a modern, globalizing world. A third movement, the Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN), pools resources and expertise across a range of local and national partners in the region and supports concrete educational and development initiatives, as well as efforts to monitor human rights across East, South, and Southeast Asia. “Precisely because such transnational movements unequivocally and emphatically reject and condemn violence and even incline toward a radical Qur’anic pacifism,” Michel argues, “they tend to be overlooked in analyses of contemporary Islamic currents of thought, organization, and activity.”

In her essay, Katherine Marshall focuses on religious involvement in the world of economic and social development. Here the large faith-inspired development organizations, including Catholic Caritas International, Protestant World Vision, and Islamic Relief, have long combined an ethical commitment to serve the poor and disadvantaged with transnational activities. Churches and Islamic charities, and other religious networks, have sustained networks of schools and hospitals. The past two decades have seen two new trends. The first is greater breadth of participation. In the context of globalization, more and more religious groups anchored at the local and national level are now active internationally. The catalyst is often a particular disaster that triggers relief efforts, such as the tsunami of 2004 or the Pakistan earthquake of 2005. The second trend concerns the scope of engagement. Faith-inspired groups are increasingly moving beyond humanitarian relief, education, and the provision of health care into new issue areas traditionally dominated by secular actors and organizations, such as women’s rights, human trafficking, the HIV/AIDS crisis, and global warming.²⁴

It is difficult to generalize about distinctive characteristics of religious actors in world affairs in the context of peacebuilding, human rights, and development. They are marked by tremendous diversity in terms of size and approach to the translation of ethical commitments into action. One pattern that emerges across the essays is that of relatively low levels of formal organization. In general, religious groups have fewer administrative resources at their disposal than states and international organizations. With exceptions that include the Catholic Church and major faith-inspired development agencies, religious groups lack extensive transnational bureaucracies and chains of command. In such circumstances, the strength of collective identity and the depth of ethical commitments can help to hold together far-flung communities.

Michel makes this point in his analysis of the Nursi and Gülen movements, which originated in Turkey and now encompass international networks with millions of members marked by common vision and shared fields of activities, but no central organization. The World Jewish Congress (WJC), mentioned by Vinjamuri and Boesenecker in their essay, provides another example. Founded in 1936, the WJC represents Jewish communities in almost 100 countries. Organizational ties and shared resources buttress its support for Israel and other policy agendas, but a shared Jewish religious and cultural identity, the historical legacy of the Holocaust, and an ethical commitment to human dignity and equality grounded in tradition are also keys to the WJC's global reach and policy effectiveness.

Ethical commitments anchored in religious traditions not only sustain communities across space, sometimes compensating for a lack of high levels of formal organization. They can also sustain long-term strategies around issues of peacebuilding, human rights, and development. Where ethical commitments constitutive of collective identity inform policy, that policy can be easier to maintain in the face of short-term setbacks. Said Nursi's commitment to nonviolence and dialogue amid the hostility of Atatürk's secular regime in Turkey provides an example of steadfastness in the face of adversity. The patient growth of the *Fe y Alegría* program of Jesuit support for primary education in poor Latin American communities, described by Marshall, is another. In their survey of transitional justice, Vinjamuri and Boesenecker argue that the depth of identity and shared commitment to ethical principles often informs "inclusiveness, community involvement, and long-term commitment" and an "ability to sustain engagement on a personal and spiritual level." Attention to long-term processes of reconciliation, they argue, has become a "hallmark of religious actors engaged in transitional justice."

If religious engagement in world affairs is growing, and ethical commitments serve to cement transnational efforts and maintain involvement over time, why have religious communities not had more of an impact on global policy agendas? A first, obvious reason has to do with competitive dynamics—Witte's "war for souls." Religious communities struggling for adherents, and against one another, in Africa, Latin America, or elsewhere, have less energy and resources to devote to peaceful engagement with social, economic, and political problems. And where they combine such engagement with proselytism—or are perceived to be doing so—they can limit their own impact. When in 2003 Franklin Graham's Samaritan's Purse organization distributed care packages to suffering Iraqi families along with material on salvation through Jesus Christ, he was roundly criticized in the media of Muslim-majority countries—and in the United States. And Saudi-based religious charities that support a

network of schools, including the Al Haramain Islamic Foundation, have been accused by the U.S. government and others of spreading a hateful, anti-Western and anti-Semitic strain of Islam.

There is another reason for this limited impact of religious actors: their local center of gravity. In the context of peacebuilding, Appleby points out that local religious leaders often lack the practical expertise of secular counterparts and, just as significantly, often do not have the time or the inclination to acquire it. The core work of most religious organizations is pastoral—tending to the spiritual and material needs of their adherents. Here, demand almost always exceeds supply, leaving limited energies for activities external to the community, including support for broader national and international initiatives. In some cases, a failure to move beyond the local, Vinjamuri and Boesenecker point out in their essay, is one reason why the work of religious actors on transitional justice has gained relatively little attention from secular groups, the media, or the academy. The next section explores the intersection of local, national, and international dynamics as both a catalyst and a constraint on religious actors in world affairs.

International-National-Local Linkages

Even amid globalization, linkages between the local and the international are mediated at the national level. States remain the key actors in world affairs—as a locus of national identity and political legitimacy and a frame for civil society, including religion. As the same time, however, as John Voll points out in his essay, “Globalization has challenged the familiar national/international polarity by transforming relationships between what were considered ‘global’ and ‘local’ aspects of politics, culture, and society.” Members of the same religious community, anchored in different parts of the world, have greater capacity to increase their cultural, social, and economic links with one another and with other religious and secular partners in other parts of the world. They can jump beyond the local—a pattern evident in the global reach of the Community of Sant’Egidio in Rome, the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., and Al-Azhar University in Cairo. Efforts to reach out to global networks within a tradition or to extend influence and activity to other parts of the world are often constrained by a preoccupation with local concerns, by limited resources, and by national laws and regulations at home and abroad. But examples of local-national-international uplinks are plentiful.

Linkages also run from the international to the national and local level, as governments, international organizations, and transnational religious actors

look for allies to mobilize resources, gather knowledge, and implement policies. Local religious actors embedded within communities can often draw on a reservoir of trust not available to secular actors. Because religion typically cuts across class, ethnic, generational, and cultural divisions, religious leaders can sometimes serve an important, if informal, representative function. “The social location and cultural power of religious leaders,” Appleby notes, “make them potentially critical players in any effort to build a sustainable peace.” Vinjamuri and Boesenecker acknowledge the importance of trust and networks but also underscore the local knowledge that makes religious groups valued partners for national and international actors. Local actors, they argue, “often possess specific characteristics that allow them to mobilize support for transitional justice strategies, including intimate knowledge of language and culture, access to firsthand information, political expertise, and long-term vision.”

Specific cases outlined in the volume illustrate the dynamics of links up from and down to the local level. Marshall’s essay examines the Aga Khan Foundation’s support of preschools in Tanzania and its successful efforts to apply international educational standards across varied local conditions. The Fe y Alegría educational network reaches more than a million people across sixteen Latin American countries and emphasizes the Jesuit ideal of ethical leadership in service to the wider community. Marshall also mentions Jubilee 2000, an effort to advocate for debt forgiveness for poor countries grounded in religious ethics that began at the local level, morphed into a global network of like-minded religious and secular activists, and ultimately impacted governments and international institutions. Another of her examples, the work of the World Faiths Development Dialogue, points to efforts of national and international faith leaders, in conjunction with the World Bank, to reach down to and support local economic and social development agendas in conjunction with the United Nation’s Millennium Development Goals.

The global engagement of religious communities, evident in complex international-national-local linkages, does not leave their internal structures untouched. Religious identity can serve as a powerful bond amid the vicissitudes of globalization—a bond reinforced by ethical commitments embedded within a particular tradition. At the same time, the spread of individualism—a cultural thrust of globalization—encourages religious adherents to exercise freedom in choosing and defining their religious identity. The individualist ethos does not necessarily undermine religion or spirituality, but it does undercut established religious authorities. A local imam, the Pope, and the Archbishop of Canterbury—all must compete more than ever within traditions for loyal followers exposed to new religious ideas, practices, and actors, through an admixture of global communications and transnational activities. Within

the Church, as Appleby points out, “Catholics publicly and vehemently oppose other Catholics over everything from birth control to liberation theology and armed resistance to political oppression and human rights abuses.” And the Archbishop of Canterbury, the head of the global Anglican Communion, has recently confronted a diverse community sharply divided on homosexuality and by transnational alliances of conservative and progressive forces.

Of these three examples, the local imam is perhaps in the most dynamic position. Islam does not have a clearly defined clerical leadership. Adherence to the Qur’an, the Sunna, and the Sharia is common to the Sunni and Shia communities, but it allows for a range of religious expressions, ranging from mystical Sufism to puritanical Wahabbism. For Islam, globalization means the further decentralization of an already decentralized religious tradition. The multiplication of new ideas and new leaders, buttressed by the Internet and other communications technologies, has led to new, unstable authority structures linking individuals and religious leaders locally, nationally, and internationally. Efforts to define Islam in Europe are a potent example of this trend. Tariq Ramadan, a Swiss citizen of Egyptian descent who teaches at Oxford University, has emerged as a very influential exponent of an Islam that embraces a centuries-old tradition, on the one hand, and contemporary norms of freedom, equality, and rule of law, on the other. Unbound by any local, national, or international religious authority, Ramadan articulates an Islam that endorses religious pluralism in a democratic context—provoking criticism from those, within and outside the Muslim fold, for whom Islam and democracy are incompatible.²⁵

Ironically, as Voll points out in his essay, the rise of religious pluralism amid globalization has also strengthened the hand of Muslim leaders such as Osama Bin Laden, intent on destroying pluralism altogether. Al-Qaeda preaches peace but glorifies violence. It claims to be acting in self-defense against the imperialist encroachments of the West but endorses suicide bombing—in violation of long-standing Muslim teaching. Bin Laden’s view that violent jihad is an obligation on individual believers isolates him from leading Muslim scholars and jurists. Still, he has been able to gather and hold a sizable following, through dramatic actions, but also through the very same communications technologies that drive religious pluralism in world affairs. While hostile to non-Muslim traditions, both religious and secular, Osama Bin Laden and his lieutenants embrace and exploit the global diversity *within* Islam. Mehta echoes Voll’s argument: “If Al-Qaeda calls into question the authority of the sovereign state, it equally calls into question any conception of religious authority.”

International-national-local linkages, then, not only empower religious communities but also can dilute their authority structures and undermine them internally. Although they are increasingly influential actors in world

affairs, religious communities are not about to displace states as a repository of both collective identity and political authority. Nation-states, not the international community, remain the primary locus of organization for religious communities—including those, like the Muslim *umma* and the Catholic Church, whose self-image is transnational. Two of the largest Muslim organizations in the world, Voll points out, are national in orientation: Indonesia's Muhammadiyah (founded in 1912) and Nahdatul Ulama (founded in 1926). The Muslim Brotherhood, sometimes viewed as a prototypical global network, remains predominantly organized at the national level in Egypt, Jordan, and elsewhere. Even the Catholic Church has powerful national forms of organization. National Bishops Conferences established in the wake of Vatican II have partially succeeded in maintaining a degree of autonomy vis-à-vis Rome.

Of the essays in the volume, Thomas Banchoff's exploration of the global politics of cloning provides the clearest example of the continued primacy of states and national identities in the context of religious pluralism. Scientific and bioethical questions, by definition, have a universal and transnational impetus. Scientific knowledge flows across borders, and basic questions about the dignity and protection of human life are a universal concern. In the case of the struggle in the UN from 2001 to 2005 over whether to ban human cloning, however, arguments from national interest trumped ethical commitments embedded in diverse religious and secular traditions. In the years before the UN took up the issue, religious communities staked out positions on stem cell and cloning research at the national level and began to articulate them in international forums. Within the UN context, the Catholic Church and the administration of George W. Bush, committed to a ban on both reproductive and therapeutic cloning, could not win the support of the Muslim-majority countries represented by the OIC. But they also ran up against arguments from national interest articulated by secular West European countries and scientific powers in Asia. Ultimately it was an insistence on national sovereignty—on a country's right to decide sensitive ethical questions for itself—that carried the day. Religion was able to inflect policy in different ways, but more at the national than at the international level.

Interfaith and Intrafaith Dynamics

As religious traditions mobilize more globally, within and across nation-states, they interact increasingly with one another. The result is a complex mix of competitive and cooperative dynamics. Over the past two decades, a sharpened struggle for adherents and resources has emerged alongside interreligious dialogue

designed to find common ground. The struggle contributes to fragile national identity politics and stokes international controversy. But what of interreligious dialogue? The largest international gathering in recent memory was the Parliament of the World's Religions of 1993, convened a century after the first such parliament was held at the Chicago world's fair. Thousands of representatives and adherents of the world's diverse faith traditions convened to explore common ground and discuss world affairs, an exercise repeated on a somewhat smaller scale in Cape Town (1999) and Barcelona (2004). Other significant gatherings include the Assemblies of the World Conference of Religions for Peace and Sant'Egidio's International Prayer for Peace, which traces its origins back to a multifaith gathering hosted by John Paul II in Assisi in 1986. The gathering of religious leaders at the UN in September 2000 to mark the turn of the millennium was a further important milestone.

The essays in this volume point beyond interfaith dialogue to interfaith interaction around global policy challenges. The call for dialogue in the Nursi and Gülen movements that Michel describes goes beyond abstract commitments; it finds expression in school curricula and educational projects in both Muslim-majority and non-Muslim-majority countries that emphasize tolerance and mutual respect. Transitional justice after civil conflict or repressive regimes offers another occasion for concrete interfaith collaboration. Vinjamuri and Boesenecker provide the example of the truth and reconciliation process in South Africa. Interfaith work joining traditional African insights into shared humanity with Christian perspectives on forgiveness enabled a choice against what Archbishop Tutu called "justice with ashes" and for "amnesty with the possibility of continuing survival for all of us." The World Faiths Development Dialogue described by Marshall is aimed precisely at the mobilization of faith communities around concrete development challenges. Appleby gives the concrete example of Muslim and Catholic leaders cooperating in the context of the UN Population Summit held in Cairo in 1994, and again during the UN World Conference on Women held in Beijing the following year. Here, shared ethical commitments solidified a conservative alliance in opposition to women's reproductive rights favored by progressive forces, both religious and secular.

As the Cairo and Beijing examples make clear, interfaith interaction should not be equated with cooperation. Conflicting interests, ethics, and identities can divide traditions internally and from one another. And sensitive issues ranging from abortion and female circumcision to capital punishment and global warming can and do generate crosscutting alliances of religious and secular forces. Contemporary world politics, Appleby points out, "might feature Catholics, Mormons, Jews, Muslims, agnostics, and atheists forming an ethical alliance against a rival bloc of Catholics, Mormons, Jews, Muslims, agnostics, and

atheists.” In the case explored by Banchoff, the alliance forged by the Vatican and Muslim-majority countries in the mid-1990s fragmented on the issues of cloning and stem cell research. Here, efforts to forge common ground came up against irreducible differences in moral theology with deep roots in opposing traditions—the Catholic view that the embryo should be treated as a person from conception, and the Muslim view that full humanity sets in weeks later. Both traditions were home to different interpretations of the cloning issue, creating some space for interfaith work for or against the projected UN ban. But dominant positions within each tradition did impose some constraints.

As the cloning example illustrates, patterns of scripture, tradition, and ethical reflection internal to religious communities can inform different approaches to global policy challenges. The key problem is how to keep the negotiation of difference, and the conflict it entails, from breaking down into discord and violence. For Appiah, keeping the negotiation of difference peaceful requires the cultivation of cosmopolitanism—an openness to other traditions and what they can teach us. He suggests that “decent, respectful engagement” with the cosmopolitans of a given tradition can “help them in their struggle to bring more of their coreligionists to the side of toleration, just as their conversation strengthens our own search for modes of productive cohabitation.” Ultimately, however, the course of dialogue *within* traditions between proponents and opponents of intolerance and violence may be decisive. Appleby cites Khaled Abou El Fadl, for whom “the burden and blessing of sustaining that moral trajectory—of accentuating the Qur’anic message of tolerance and openness to the other—falls squarely on the shoulders of contemporary Muslim interpreters of the tradition.”²⁶ A parallel burden falls on leaders and interpreters of other traditions, whether Christian or Jewish, Hindu or Buddhist.

Religious-Secular Interaction

Interfaith and intrafaith debates do shape religious engagement in world affairs. But religious-secular interaction is probably more important. Secular actors tend to set the global agenda. Relations among states, international institutions, markets, and corporations—almost exclusively nonreligious actors—determine the overall direction of world politics. The main lines of conflict and cooperation within and across them provide the context for religious involvement in the public sphere. The U.S.-led invasion of Iraq and the unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict have an adverse impact on Christian-Muslim-Jewish collaboration on peace, human rights, and development agendas. And the failure of the World Trade Organization to achieve breakthroughs on agricultural

subsidies and tariff schedules that impede international trade adversely affects efforts to build coalitions between religious organizations in the global North and South. Struggles for power and wealth inflect the course of religious pluralism in world politics.

Within this broader constellation, it is hardly surprising that most religious organizations engage other faith traditions far less than they do secular actors ranging from local governments and civil associations through international organizations. Secular-religious interaction encompasses efforts to win resources and protection from government authorities. But it also includes collaboration across multiple issue areas. In Cambodia, Appleby points out, Buddhist monks worked with secular NGOs with expertise in organizing peaceful movements for social and political change. Appleby notes that such partnerships pool expertise but also can support political coalitions for policy change. Marshall's essay also includes several examples of positive religious-secular cooperation. The World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD) has served both as a forum for religious leaders and as a partner for the World Bank, which was dedicated, under its president, James Wolfensohn, to deeper interaction with faith communities around its poverty reduction agenda.

Religious-secular collaboration in these cases and others is marked by two kinds of tension. One might be termed "cultural suspicion"—anxiety among religious groups about secular organizations, and vice versa, based on their very different core identities and beliefs. Appleby notes that Cambodian monks marching for democracy and justice were initially averse to accepting the secular support that eventually contributed so much to their success. The mixed record of the WFDD–World Bank partnership in practice derives in part from a clash of cultures: the prevalent view of religion, among World Bank officials, as irrational, parochial, and therefore dangerous, and hostility in some religious circles toward a perceived technocratic, pro-market bias within global economic and financial institutions. Such a culture clash can also carry over into different strategies and tactics. Tensions between forgiveness and retribution in the context of transitional justice provide an example. "Strategies pursued especially by religious capacity-builders," Vinjamuri and Boesenecker point out, have "provided a significant counterweight to the legalism embraced by many large international human rights organizations."

Related religious-secular tension is sometimes also manifest at the institutional level. As noted previously, religious communities often lack the formal organization of governments and established secular NGOs. They tend to rely more on diffuse identities and shared ethical commitments to mobilize members for action. As a result, when it comes to following through on particular initiatives, such groups do not always have the organizational means

or specialized knowledge necessary to be effective partners on human rights and development issues. Efforts to increase professionalism can improve the prospects for effective collaboration with secular actors in practice. Vinjamuri and Boesenecker outline the efforts of the Mennonite Central Committee—one of the best-organized religious peacebuilding organizations—to build institutional capacity in Latin America through the systematic training of local actors over time.²⁷ Marshall notes another success story, the collaboration of the World Bank and Sant'Egidio to improve the treatment of HIV/AIDS in three African countries. Here high levels of professionalism on both sides helped to defuse religious-secular tensions—cultural suspicions that a Catholic group might push treatment to the exclusion of prevention, and an institutional concern about its ability to implement programs on the ground.

The future of religious-secular interaction will depend in no small part on how these cultural and institutional tensions are negotiated across traditions, regions, and issue areas. Much will turn on whether religious organizations develop a pragmatic problem-solving ethos that does not foreground theological claims or proselytism, and on the development of the organizational capacity and professional skill set to implement particular programs. Here, the Mennonite Central Council, Sant'Egidio, World Vision, and other established groups provide a model. Another key issue is whether secular actors and institutions can abandon views of religion as a purely private affair or as a necessarily divisive and destructive force, and acknowledge its powerful and productive role across a range of policy challenges, including human rights and economic and social development. Religious-secular collaboration is no substitute for governance in the public interest, at the level of states or international institutions. In the light of growing religious pluralism in world politics, and the passions it can enflame, it is critical that the exercise of public authority be oriented by concern for the common good. At the same time, however, where religion enters the public sphere in a significant way, only political authorities that reach out to religious communities and tap their ethical commitments and enthusiasm will be able to build sustainable coalitions and govern effectively.

The Centrality of the United States

This picture of the new international constellation is incomplete in one major respect—it does not acknowledge the vast power asymmetries that frame and inform the intersection of religious pluralism, globalization, and world politics. States remain the most important actors in world politics, and the United States towers above the rest in terms of its economic and security influence.²⁸

The fact that the United States is a Christian-majority country with a significant Jewish community has a global impact. For while one might be able to distinguish between the United States and Christianity (or the Judeo-Christian) at an analytical level, the juxtaposition and interpenetration of material power and religious tradition inflect world politics at the level of perceptions. Most citizens in Muslim-majority countries, for example, view the United States as a Christian nation. Many further view Christian relief and development organizations as extensions of U.S. power—even when their activities have no clear link back to U.S. national interests. (The lens works in reverse as well. Citizens in the United States and Europe tend to view the foreign policies of Pakistan and Egypt, not to mention Saudi Arabia and Iran, through a religious lens. Perhaps because religious identity is foundational for so many, it becomes a handy category for analyzing interstate affairs, whether it maps on to reality or not.)

By its sheer economic, political, and military weight, the United States does multiply the influence of Christianity and Judaism as forces in world affairs. This happens at the level of civil society, where Protestant missionary efforts have been centered for more than a century; where the Catholic Church, which accounts for about a fifth of the U.S. population, has a disproportionate influence on the evolution of the global Catholic community; and through the national Jewish community, which provides much of the leadership for its international counterpart. Increasingly, as Elizabeth Prodromou argues in her essay, the intersection of religion and American power is evident not just at the level of society and its transnational engagement, but at the level of government and policy. Under the presidency of George W. Bush, an Evangelical, religious identities and ethical commitments had a significant impact on U.S. foreign policy—and an even greater impact on perceptions of that policy abroad.

Prodromou discusses two key historical junctures in U.S. policy: the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 and the attacks of September 11, 2001. With the collapse of the Soviet empire in 1989–1991 and the acceleration of globalization, religious mobilization in U.S. politics coincided with heightened awareness of religious persecution across many countries, and the Sudan in the particular. Political entrepreneurs put together a powerful, multifaith, religious-secular, and bipartisan coalition to secure the passage of the 1998 legislation. Religion moved up the U.S. foreign policy agenda, even if it did not play a central role in overall U.S. diplomacy around the world.²⁹ The attacks of September 11, 2001, and the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan and then Iraq reinforced this religious turn. The struggle against Islamic radicalism—what Bush, starting in 2004, termed “Islamofascism”—became both a foreign policy priority and a rallying cry in U.S. domestic politics. The worldwide perception of a religious impetus in U.S. foreign policy was reinforced by Bush’s injudicious use

of the term “crusade” and multiple references to the divine as an ally in U.S. efforts to rid the world of evil. One result of this trend, as John Voll reminds us, was erosion of U.S. cultural influence and an increase in the “soft power” of Osama Bin Laden and other radicals, that is, their ability to persuade others to join their cause.³⁰

Overall, U.S. domestic politics and foreign policy under Bush have shaped religious pluralism in world politics along multiple dimensions. Identity politics in the United States, already fragile in the context of the multiculturalism debates and culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s, has grown more fractious in the wake of September 11, 2001. Rhetoric about the United States as a Christian or a Judeo-Christian nation under siege by the forces of secularism, on the one hand, and by Islam, on the other, punctuates American politics. And the Muslim minority, 1 to 2 percent of the population, has faced growing harassment and discrimination. In the new millennium U.S.-based religious groups are at the center of international-national-local linkages that support both missionary activity and transnational mobilization around global challenges such as HIV/AIDS and global warming. Christian and Jewish groups are active in interfaith initiatives and religious-secular partnerships around the world. Across these varied dimensions of religious pluralism and world affairs, U.S. influence and globalization feed off each other, as global communications and an emphasis on the rights of individuals strengthen U.S.-anchored agendas around the world and across issues.

If the United States, as the world’s only superpower, both exemplifies and strengthens religious pluralism in the world arena, it also threatens to undermine it. The recourse to military force, in Iraq in particular, has deepened mistrust between the West and the Islamic world, complicating Christian-Muslim-Jewish efforts to address common policy agendas. And the U.S. emphasis on international religious freedom, when combined with support for Christians in the Muslim world, China, India, and elsewhere, evokes the specter of a superpower throwing its military, economic, and political resources behind a particular religious agenda. U.S. officials can and do claim that the war in Iraq is about peace, stability, and democracy—not about repressing and dividing Islam—and that support for religious freedom is best understood as support for universal human rights, not the advancement of a worldwide Christian agenda. But in a world marked by sharp power asymmetries, colonial and post-colonial legacies, a festering Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the current reality of U.S. troops invading and then occupying two Muslim-majority countries, the perception of a U.S.-led international crusade is difficult to counteract.

Prodromou ends her analysis on a hopeful note. Despite its weakened moral authority, she maintains that “the United States possesses material resources

that could serve to strengthen international law and global governance in a post-cold war order marked by a resurgence of ethnic and religious differences and greater cultural and religious pluralism.” The United States will remain a Christian-majority nation with a religious political culture. And it will not soon be eclipsed as the leading power on the world stage. Tensions at the intersection of religion and world politics will continue, as transnational religious mobilization anchored in the United States and American support for international religious freedom generate hostility and resistance in some quarters. “But a positive redirection of the role of religion in U.S. foreign policy—in the service of durable forms of global governance and robust democratic regimes—is possible,” Prodromou argues. For her it “presupposes a break with the destructive combination of religion, unilateralism, and resort to force that characterized U.S. foreign policy under the presidency of George W. Bush.”

Conclusion

The essays in this volume cannot provide a comprehensive overview of religious pluralism at the intersection of globalization and world politics. That terrain is too vast. The complexity of the topic also militates against the development of a comprehensive theory of religion and world affairs that might map on to or explain an emergent international constellation. The ambitions of this essay have been correspondingly modest—to define key concepts, including religious pluralism and globalization, and to explore their interaction with world politics across a variety of traditions, regions, and issue areas addressed in the volume. That exploration reveals six interrelated dimensions of religious pluralism in world affairs that will likely persist into the foreseeable future: fragile identity politics, strong ethical commitments, international-national-local linkages, interfaith and intrafaith dynamics, religious-secular interaction, and the centrality of the United States.

None of those six dimensions is isolated from the other five, as the preceding analysis makes clear. The fragile politics of national identity in India, for example, is shaped by international-national-local linkages, including economic globalization and the efforts of Christian missionaries. Strong ethical commitments grounded in religious traditions, such as the universal norm of human dignity, can sharpen identity politics but also form a basis for interfaith and intrafaith collaboration. The potential for collaboration around economic and social development agendas is conditioned by religious-secular interaction, in particular the policies and priorities pursued by states, international organizations, and nonreligious NGOs. And the United States, with its preponderant military and

economic power, can shape identity politics within other countries—most dramatically today in Afghanistan and Iraq—and, through its diplomacy around human rights and religious freedom, mold the evolution of international-national-local linkages within and across increasingly transnational religious communities.

Two overarching themes that emerge at the intersection of these six dimensions are the centrality of states and the problem of violence. Religious pluralism in world affairs is a fragile construct because of the decentralized structure of the state system. In the absence of a global sovereign, religious groups often depend on states for protection and resources. In fact, as Pratap Mehta reminds us in his essay, the state determines what counts as religion within a particular territory and political domain. Happily, the running debate about globalization has moved beyond claims and counterclaims about the demise of the state. In the religious context and others, the key issue is not whether the state can survive globalization but how it is reacting and changing in response to it. Religious-political conflict and cooperation at the level of the state—and not an amorphous clash or dialogue of civilizations—will drive the future trajectory of religious pluralism in world politics.³¹ From this perspective, the United States is a particularly critical player. But other emergent world powers, including China and India, will have a decisive impact on the trajectory of religious pluralism internationally in the years to come.

A second overarching theme, with which this essay began, is the problem of violence. Religious pluralism in this volume is defined by an *absence* of violence, as the peaceful interaction of religious actors with one another and secular actors in the public sphere. The chapters point up the growth of religious pluralism in world politics, as religious communities have become more global in their outlook and activities across issues including human rights and economic and social development. The spread of religious ideas and movements, dramatically accelerated by globalization, is remarkable for its predominantly peaceful character. Even proselytism, which engages passions and can provoke political tensions, rarely generates bloodshed.

Even as religious pluralism flourishes in the context of globalization, its very success poses a double threat. On the one hand, the open encounter of religious perspectives, on the Internet in particular, provides an opening for extremists to preach hatred, intolerance, and violence. Opponents of religious pluralism like Osama Bin Laden can exploit pluralism in their efforts to destroy it. On the other hand, as religion figures more prominently in the public sphere around the world, it presents opportunities for political leaders to stir up passions and exacerbate conflicts in an effort to consolidate power at home and extend it abroad. Neither threat to religious pluralism—extremist ideas and

political manipulation—is likely to disappear. Violent religious ideologies, however reprehensible, cannot be effectively suppressed, and the surge of religion into public life, with its divisive potential, looks to be part of a long-term trend. Under these circumstances, whether religious pluralism in world politics survives and thrives will depend in large part on interreligious and religious-secular dialogue and engagement and its capacity to strengthen those within and across traditions committed to peaceful coexistence.

NOTES

1. On religion and violence in contemporary world affairs, see Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11th* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

2. For an influential theological approach to religious pluralism, see John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004). Sociological approaches to religious pluralism include Robert Wuthnow, *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); and Diana L. Eck, *A New Religious America: How a “Christian Country” Has Become the World’s Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (San Francisco: Harper-SanFrancisco, 2002).

3. For an exploration of the new religious pluralism in the transatlantic context, see Thomas Banchoff, ed., *Democracy and the New Religious Pluralism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

4. On the resurgence of religion in world affairs, see José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and James Piscatori, eds., *Transnational Religion and Fading States* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997); Peter L. Berger, *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1999); Eric O. Hanson, *Religion and Politics in the International System Today* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); and Daniel Philpott, “Explaining the Political Ambivalence of Religion,” *American Political Science Review* 101, no. 3 (August 2007): 505–525.

5. Daniel Philpott, “The Catholic Wave,” *Journal of Democracy* 15, no. 2 (April 2004): 32–46; Eric O. Hanson, *The Catholic Church in World Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987).

6. Zoe Knox, *Russian Society and the Orthodox Church: Religion in Russia after Communism* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Paul Freston, *Evangelicals and Politics in Asia, Africa, and Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

7. Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); Giles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002).

8. Yossi Shain, *Kinship and Diasporas in International Affairs* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007).

9. Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999); Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
10. Christopher Queen, Charles Prebish, and Damien Keown, eds., *Action Dharma: New Studies in Engaged Buddhism* (London: Routledge, 2003); Charles F. Keyes, Laurel Kendall, and Helen Hardacre, eds., *Asian Visions of Authority: Religion and the Modern States of East and Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994).
11. For examinations of globalization as a concept, see Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage, 1992); David Held, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt, and Jonathan Perraton, *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics, and Culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999); and Benjamin Barber, *Jihad versus McWorld: Terrorism's Challenge to Democracy* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2001).
12. Secular organizations, too, have exploited globalization to mobilize on a transnational scale. They are the focus of Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998); and Sidney Tarrow, *The New Transnational Activism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
13. These dynamics are explored by Roy, *Globalized Islam*. Important discussions in the Christian context include David Stoll, *Is Latin America Turning Protestant?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); and Paul E. Sigmund, ed., *Religious Freedom and Evangelization in Latin America: The Challenge of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999).
14. Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, *The Sacred and the Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
15. John Witte Jr. and Michael Bourdeaux, eds., *Proselytism and Orthodoxy in Russia: The New War for Souls* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999); John Witte Jr. and Johan D. van der Vyver, eds., *Religious Human Rights in Global Perspective*, 2 vols. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1996); Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'Im, *Proselytization and Communal Self-Determination in Africa* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999).
16. See, for example, Derek H. Davis and Gerhard Besier, eds., *International Perspectives on Freedom and Equality of Religious Beliefs* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2002).
17. See, for example, Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (New York: Norton, 2007); Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); and Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).
18. On Hindu-Muslim relations in India, see Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civil Life: Hindus and Muslims in India* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002).
19. For an overview of the politics of international religious freedom, see Thomas F. Farr, *World of Faith and Freedom: Why Religious Liberty Is Vital to American National Security in the 21st Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

20. For an extended discussion of Taylor's views on pluralism, see Ruth Abbey, ed., *Charles Taylor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
21. Hans Kung, *A Global Ethic: The Declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religions* (London: Continuum, 1994).
22. On religion and peacebuilding, see R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000); Harold Coward and Gordon S. Smith, eds., *Religion and Peacebuilding* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004); Marc Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence, and Peacemaking* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace in Divided Societies* (Syracuse, NY: University of Syracuse Press, 1997); Mohammed Abu-Nimer, *Nonviolence and Peace Building in Islam: Theory and Practice* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2003).
23. A. James McAdams, ed., *Transitional Justice and the Rule of Law in New Democracies* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997); Martha Minow, ed., *Breaking the Cycles of Hatred: Memory, Law, and Repair* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).
24. Katherine Marshall and Lucy Keough, *Mind, Heart and Soul in the Fight against Poverty* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2004); and Katherine Marshall and Marisa Van Saanen, *Development and Faith: Where Mind, Heart and Soul Work Together* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2007).
25. Tariq Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
26. A key text is Khaled Abou El Fadl, *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005).
27. John Paul Lederach and Cynthia Sampson, eds., *From the Ground Up: Mennonite Contributions to International Peacebuilding* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
28. For reflections on the role of religion in U.S. foreign policy, see Madeleine K. Albright, *The Mighty and the Almighty: Reflections on America, God, and World Affairs* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006). On the religion–foreign policy nexus more broadly, see Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson, eds., *Religion: The Missing Dimension of Statecraft* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); and Douglas Johnston, ed., *Faith-Based Diplomacy: Trumping Realpolitik* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).
29. On the politics of the International Religious Freedom Act, see Allen D. Hertzke, *Freeing God's Children: The Unlikely Alliance for Global Human Rights* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004).
30. On soft power, see Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Power in the Global Information Age: From Realism to Globalization* (London: Routledge, 2004).
31. Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 22–49.

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