

## Capacities for Global Politics: Cultures and Public Religions in the Pacific Rim

### 地球政治の力量 —環太平洋における文化と公共宗教—

David WESSELS

デヴィッド・ウェッセルズ

現代の地球政治では宗教と文化が顕著な変数になっている。グローバル化の動態において、人々のアイデンティティのルーツになっているからである。「儒教の倫理」による近代化の説明や「アジアの人権」の言説にこうしたルーツがあることは明らかである。また中南米の「解放の神学」や米国の「市民宗教 (civil religion)」は地球規模の変化にまで影響を及ぼしている。個人や社会のアイデンティティ、宗教的信仰、民族の出会いが、国際安全保障、政治経済、公共宗教 (public religion) を変容させる要因になっている。ニュースの主な項目はテロと経済成長で占められがちであり、地球規模の変化の過程に参加する基本的能力は往々にして見落とされる。しかし環太平洋の宗教と文化には、権力、アイデンティティ、および意味の社会的源泉が見出される。東南アジアにおけるイスラムの政治、韓国と中国におけるキリスト教の成長、多元主義的政体における文化多元主義の現象は、この地域の事実他にない。文化と公共宗教の動態は21世紀の地球政治の避けられない課題である。

### I. Introduction

In these early years of the twenty-first century, understanding religions and cultures is a prerequisite for any assessment of global politics, and the Pacific Rim is a good venue for just such an assessment. Among the dynamics of globalization, one finds public identities forged by religious and cultural forces. These, in turn,

transform the classic issues of international relations—security, economic development, democratization. While secular political analyses have often overlooked these forces or viewed them as elements disruptive of nation-building and international peace, they actually are the foundations of human capacities for engagement in today's world. Appreciating contemporary religions and cultures also requires a new look at the actors that have traditionally been seen as the agents of international politics. Around the Pacific Rim, as elsewhere, personal and social sources of power, identity, and meaning are found in the variables of religions and cultures.

## **II. Perceptions and Presuppositions**

Numerous scholars attest that there has been a revival of interest in the role of religions (Petito and Hatzopoulos, 2003) and cultures (Lapid and Kratochwil, 1996) in the academic field of international relations. Many have also remarked sadly that it took the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, to bring these essential variables to the attention of some analysts, to say nothing of the practitioners of politics. In any case, some basic presuppositions for understanding international or global politics need to be clarified so that misperceptions about the variables of religions and cultures may be avoided. While the Pacific Rim that is the empirical focus of this paper does not encompass the full range of human differences found throughout the whole world, no one would deny that it includes a vast diversity of both cultures and religions. These elements are fundamental to any systematic treatment of international relations in the region.

*Religions and cultures:* At a rather high level of abstraction, but nonetheless in significant ways, one main current of the practice and study of international relations for centuries has excluded religious views and cultural differences from epistemic consideration. Both practitioners and theorists have often attempted to mold a secular

politics in contradistinction to any religious realities, often based on what sociologists identify as secularization theories. Even as this secular agenda has become more explicit in recent centuries, the last few decades have seen some reconsiderations among scholars of international relations of the significance of religion (Hurd 2004; Fox 2001). That is to say, religion will not be sidelined according to a way of viewing the world that simply ignores it, defines it as a private affair, or even actively rejects or persecutes it. Public religions have been placed decisively on the global agenda (Casanova 1994).

The interaction of religion and culture is a valid supposition, but one which may be unnoticed if both are overlooked by a social science approach that assumes religion and/or culture need not be examined in a “modern” world. Both religions and cultures need to be taken seriously (Thomas 2003). The impact of a modernization theory that would not or could not recognize differences in such variables (Inayatullah and Blaney 2004) has been negative for all of international relations. The numerous epistemological and normative arguments for reconsidering culture in international relations theory are beyond the scope of this article, but suffice it to say that efforts are being made to reexamine foundational concepts of international relations from the perspective of history, culture, and religion (Philpott 2001; Puchala 2004).

*Globalization:* Another element of the world-view in international relations today takes the name *globalization*. The term is so ubiquitous that it can and does take on different nuances in the contexts of social change, business strategies, political trends, and cultural interactions in today’s world (Robertson 1992; Giddens 2000; Berger and Huntington 2002). For the purposes of this paper, I will highlight some aspects of the phenomenon that affect capacities for global politics in the Pacific area. Mutual interdependencies, multicultural encounters, and identity consciousness are shaping the peoples and polities of the Pacific Rim as they engage global trends.

From a global perspective, many religions have been meaningfully universal in content and geographical spread for millennia. The new globalization is a catalyst for changes within and among religions, as well (Juergensmeyer 2003). As the ideas and practices and communities of various faiths interact today, cultures and societies themselves change. The political unit of the nation-state or even a supposed “Westphalian system” of sovereign nation-states cannot contain these forces (Rudolph and Piscatori 1997). Even within such a paradigmatic example of the modern nation-state as the United States of America, a renewed presence of religion in the public square (Hecl and McClay 2003) demonstrates that the longer-term trends associated with religions are among the processes of change that are most salient in today’s world.

*Mutual interdependencies in the Pacific Rim:* Efforts to build regional economic and political ties are seen in such institutions as APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation), ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), and Mercosur (South American Southern Cone Common Market). These and other international political efforts parallel the rapid increase in the penetration of trade and financial markets by multinational corporations and other private actors. As transport and communications become easier, economic efficiencies and other mutual advantages bring widespread benefits, while vulnerabilities such as those displayed in the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997-1998 can also have negative impacts on the entire region and beyond.

*Multicultural encounters:* Cultures, indeed whole civilizations, that historically had few if any contacts for centuries, have suddenly found themselves part of a global village, with multicultural encounters the norm rather than the exception. Everything from linguistic communication and popular music to architectural styles and internet habits displays a pattern of global penetration of particular cultures and their steady transformation. The movement of people within and

between bordered polities has taken on new meaning as cultures mix and develop. (*Human Development Report 2004*)

*Identity consciousness:* The increase in the scope and intensity of these globalized contacts has an impact on individual and social consciousness. Newness and diversity are dialectically appreciated by a rediscovery of roots and continuities that makes for a heightened sense of identity. Cultural heritage and religious community are bonds that unite people across time and space even as contemporary changes affect public and private life. Of course, the degree of reflection on one's personal or group identity varies greatly, but awareness of identities formed under the impact of globalization is widespread among the people around the Pacific, as elsewhere in the world.

*Processes of change:* Views of international relations today also concern the processes of change that dominate the world. It is probably past the time when a category like "post-Cold War" and the various economic and political transitions which that historical moment inspired can hope to encapsulate those processes. The events of September 11, 2001, too, spawned a "post-9/11" viewpoint that is persistent but limited. The "post-" evaluations capture some elements of global dynamics, but leave others out and so can hardly be said to offer a positive picture of the whole scene.

From this perspective the processes of change in cultures and religions do not grab daily headlines, but slowly spread their impact on peoples, states, and the world. The time-frame in which these events take place is, of course, an important part of the understanding of these changes. President Suharto's departure from the presidency (1998) in the context of the Asian financial crisis and various stages of the ensuing political transition in Indonesia exhibits relatively quick regime change, but within the larger context of a political culture of democratization in Asia that affected the Philippines, South Korea, and Taiwan over a longer time. The period of capitalistic reforms in China (while they are "post-Mao," they also are associated with a strange

hybrid of political and economic ideologies) has also been a period of religious transformation (Aikman 2003; Kindopp and Hamrin 2004). While Japan's foreign relations still exhibit "postwar" (that is, post-Second World War) problems, the cultural ethos in politics and religion within the country after 60 years is certainly different in 2005 from what it was in 1945, and this may prove to be more significant for world history than the military affairs of a previous period.

*Capacities for global politics:* The capacities for global politics that I address differ from those of the national political institutions that analysts of comparative politics have studied (Jackman 1993). Global politics is not merely the sum total of the politics of national states, whether they are evaluated separately or in the context of their interactions. The global politics approach borrows from insights in the literature on governance, which sees the political world as something more complex than the workings of governments and something denser than mere interactions among states. (Wessels 1998; Rosenau & Czempiel 1992) The capacities and resources of national polities, such as those described by Morgenthau (1967), are relevant to an understanding of the distribution of power among states, but do not suffice as either analytical or real-world tools of global politics.

Politics includes the framing of choices, the making of decisions, and the authoritative implementation of actions for public values. Politics is global by the scope of the values and processes involved. Therefore in direct and indirect ways, in countless situations today, politics must be called global. While the focus here is on events and actors in the Pacific Rim, the peoples and nations of this region are drawn into the vortex of global politics at many levels.

Attention in the study of international relations and global politics needs to be given to the broad story of human civilizations (Mozaffari 2002; Braudel 1994), world history (Buzan and Little 2000), and cooperative global relations (Wessels 1993, 1998; Iriye 2002). That, in turn, requires further understanding of cultures and religions. Berger's

pithy definition of the cultural dimension of globalization will suffice here as a working definition of culture: “the beliefs, values, and lifestyles of ordinary people in their everyday existence.”<sup>1</sup> My own working definition of religion includes four elements: creed (the profession of faith, including doctrine), morality (the ethical dimension of faith in lived behavior), worship (expressing the believer’s notice of the divine or transcendent), and community (the human solidarity involved in a common faith).<sup>2</sup> There is, of course, an overlap between cultures and religions; as Braudel comments in regard to civilizations as ways of thought: “Here religion is the strongest feature of civilizations, at the heart of both their present and their past.” (Braudel 1994, p. 22) Cultures and religions, of course, are to be regarded as changing and developing, not a museum piece or archaeological artifact of the past.

Capacities derive from these cultural and religious depths of human life as well as from more proximate means relating to military, economic, and geophysical resources, and political and institutional strengths. If one considers the task of building a peaceful world, it is clear that the positive forces of cultures and religions are essential elements and have in fact operated in that way in past and present; “negative capacities” that tend toward war and other destructive actions also can derive power from religions and cultures (Appleby 2000). At a very basic level, people find meaning in human labor and achievement and community that is bound up with their religious and cultural orientations. When integrated into an understanding of global politics, this insight into human action provides a holistic perspective that can be lost when human behavior is viewed simply as material acquisition or consumption, as the imposition of power, or as some kind

---

1 Berger, “Introduction,” in Berger and Huntington, 2002, p. 2.

2 This definition of religion is my own personal formulation, which borrows from some of the ideas of Clifford Howell (Howell 1952, pp. 4, 13, *passim*).

of rational choice by a self-sufficing agent.

### **III. Religions and Cultures in the Pacific Rim**

In this section, I will illustrate the point of this paper by numerous examples from the region of the Pacific Rim. It is not a systematic study of the cultures and religions found there, but a selection of materials relevant to the theme of capacities for global politics found in the area. For the purposes of this paper, Pacific Rim refers to the peoples and countries of the entire Pacific Basin as they engage in global politics. Thus, it is a term of wider geographical scope than that which *Time* magazine popularized some years ago (Aikman 1986), with an analytic focus on aspects of global politics as I have explained above.

The various cultures under discussion range from those found in the Pacific islands and the metropolises of Asia and the Americas, to those of scientists and scholars, and those of people who engage in fishing and farming and global business, as well as those among trendy cultural entrepreneurs and practitioners of traditional arts. Religions include world-encircling Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism, as well as ethnically limited but still extensive Chinese Taoism and Japanese Shinto, and many other traditional and contemporary groups. Ethnic borders may largely coincide with political boundaries as in Japan, while they fluidly cross those boundaries as in much of Southeast Asia, and blur in the case of multicultural nation-states like Australia, Canada, and the United States.

In the 1980s, economic successes in a number of East Asian countries led to speculation about the possible sources of their development. Confucianism has been suggested as an equivalent civilizational or cultural force in East Asia to what Weber had called the "Protestant ethic" in the West (Kim Il Gon 1984). How satisfactory this hypothesis is in explaining such a widespread and long-term process remains open to question; but Confucianism, folk religions, and

the other religions discussed above have been flourishing as the region has made dramatic strides in development (Berger and Hsiao 1988). The vital cultural drive and ethical roots in China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore have been powerful forces for a region that has experienced unprecedented development and integration into the global economy. Confucian, Buddhist, and Christian regeneration in these countries also benefits from a regional network of more intense contacts that characterizes globalization more generally.

On the other side of the Pacific, Latin American countries have known religious change since the 1960s, but primarily in the Christian traditions of the region. In the Catholic Church, liberation theology opened vistas of progress in earthly realities that was less evident in previous theological reflection, and base communities developed as sources of human empowerment. A strong advance of evangelical Protestantism in the region has demonstrated a number of global trends. It has spread not only ethics and ideas, but also patterns of communication and production from North to South in the Americas. The networks within Latin America, and extending particularly from South to North among Spanish-speaking groups in the Americas, also exhibit the multi-directionality of globalization: it is not just a process by which a modern and developed West affects the rest, but a truly interactive and interdependent cultural phenomenon. Furthermore, the evangelical or Pentecostal trends in North and South American religiosity have also been flourishing in Oceania and Northeast Asia, including China, despite severe restrictions and even persecution of unauthorized religious movements there. These religious developments change governance in numerous ways: demands for economic participation and social justice increase; political pluralism expands; new international networks flourish through religious channels.

While Christian-based social movements in the United States are

linked to specific domestic and international policy issues in the country, they also manifest global trends. One area in which both secular and religious networks have been involved is the defense of human rights; American attention to human rights outside U.S. borders since at least the presidency of Jimmy Carter reflects that involvement. A particularly noticeable case is the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (Oct. 27, 1998; 105 P.L. 292; 112 Stat. 2787). Under its terms, an Office and an Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom prepare an annual report on international religious freedom to serve as an aid for the policies of the United States Government in this respect. While viewed by some as yet another case of U.S. unilateralism in the international arena (Danchin 2002; Drinan 2004), there is no doubt that it represents the heightened salience of religious concerns in international public policy.

The two-edged character of this particular case reflects the complexity of cultural and religious impacts on the capacities for global politics. On the one hand, religious values are evident behind this drive for religious freedom globally; and they help to account for the mobilization of a powerful national political apparatus in defense of a globally proclaimed right. On the other hand, the particular national (U.S.A.) and religious (Christian) origins of this world-wide monitoring of the interactions of religions and governments (and even societies) throughout the world shows how difficult it is for any one actor in global politics to have sufficient moral, legal, or political stature to address such a problem on its own.

In the Philippines, the long-running conflict on Mindanao between government forces and Muslim insurgents is another complex religious and cultural issue. Though it is focused on one country, the implications go beyond the borders of the Philippines in several ways. The ideological basis for the insurgents draws strength from a much wider resurgence in the Muslim faith throughout the world. And many of the leaders of the Philippine Muslims envision a broader Muslim

polity in the Southeast Asian region. Even as the Philippines forges a national cultural base, it is entwined in global currents not just of economics and politics, but also of religion and culture.

Education in several countries of Southeast Asia illustrates the overlap between religion and culture, as well as the political (and potentially military) implications. The Muslim majority countries of Indonesia and Malaysia, as well as Muslim minority countries Thailand and the Philippines, have extensive schooling systems operated by Muslim religious authorities. Although they generally provide needed educational services to the population, some have political agendas which oppose the national government or contribute to Islamic militancy; however, these Southeast Asian schools do not have the reputation as terrorist breeding grounds found in some of the *madrassas* in Pakistan. Education is undoubtedly a crucial element in capacity building for societies and states, and religiously-based schools (particularly Christian, as well as the Muslim ones just mentioned) certainly pass on cultural as well as religious values between generations.

As noted earlier, multicultural encounters are a characteristic of life around the Pacific Rim as well as elsewhere in a globalizing world. Some of the traditional countries of immigration (such as the United States, Canada, Australia), as well as some Latin American and Asian countries with indigenous peoples or other minorities, have faced the question of multiculturalism directly. This certainly includes attention to religious differences among other cultural elements. It may be that a multicultural environment is a particular trademark of globalization, although the ambiguities in meaning and uncertainties of the direction in which these trends are going make a firm evaluation difficult. But capacities for multicultural and inter-religious encounters seem to be growing in the Pacific Rim, and this suggests that a spillover into political interaction in the region is likely.

Brief mention was made above of a democratization process that has

been evident in several countries along the East Asian edge of the Pacific Rim. Beginning with the “people’s power” movement in the Philippines in 1986, there has been an evolution toward more democratic politics in South Korea (from 1987), Taiwan (late 1980s to today), and Indonesia (from 1998). In the Philippines and South Korea, Christian groups were among the prominent advocates of human rights and democratic change. In Indonesia, Islamic-based political parties aided the democratic transition in a country with a wider *pancasila* religious ethos. East Timor’s process of becoming an independent state (Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste) and taking the first steps of democratization also find a distinct social base in the country’s largely Catholic population. The obverse is seen in China, where repeated crackdowns on Falun Gong (a movement with at least some religious characteristics) and various religions are associated with the repression of democratic forces within the country.

The cases above illustrate the dynamic interaction of religious, cultural, and political forces in the Pacific Rim. My claim is not that either traditional or new forms of religion and culture have somehow hijacked the political process in the region. Rather, religions (in their specific character) and cultures (again, varying from place to place, in all their specificity) show a vigor that influences political events and patterns in dramatic ways. Of course, global (and local) politics in turn creates a certain space within which these trends are manifested, a recursive dynamic that results in renewed capacities for global political influence by cultures and religions in both positive and negative senses.

Sociologists have been trying to identify the nature of the interaction between religion and global trends more generally. There are certain social movements rooted in religious groups that engage directly in activities with impact on politics at many levels, and globalization itself is a transformative process bound up with religions new and old (Beyer, 1994). More generally, powerful ideologies of contemporary nationalism mix with religious elements, sometimes producing volatile

conflagrations in many parts of the world (Juergensmeyer 1993). Religious “militants” for peace and reconciliation also serve as the driving force behind the ideas and actions that contribute to many programs of peace and justice (Appleby 2000). This brief survey has illustrated the way in which religion and politics have mixed around the Pacific Rim. More generally, it has demonstrated the mutual impact of cultures and globalization in the region.

#### **IV. Values**

By examining some crucial values in this section, I will explain further the essential role of religions and cultures in establishing capacities for global politics in the Pacific Rim. The four specific values that I will consider are: (1) tolerance and freedom; (2) fundamentalisms; (3) ethnicity; (4) the convergence of religion and politics. None of these value questions is exclusive to the Pacific Rim, but the way they are played out in this region can fill in the picture begun in the previous section’s survey of religions and cultures.

*Tolerance and freedom:* The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1948, proclaimed principles of nondiscrimination and equality (Articles 1 and 2) and the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and belief (Article 18). The genocide experienced by European Jews under Nazi rule was a major reason for the adoption of this international norm. The intent of this right has been clarified by other United Nations resolutions: Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (G.A. Resolution 36/55 of 25 November 1981); Resolution on the Elimination of All Forms of Religious Intolerance (G.A. Resolution 48/128 of 14 February 1994). Freedom and tolerance in matters of religion have been widely acclaimed as values in national constitutions and legal systems, in international assemblies, in religious bodies, and in the writings of

many commentators.

The histories of the various countries and peoples of the Pacific Rim show a great diversity of patterns of religious tolerance or the lack thereof, histories made even more complex by the various colonial and imperial systems over the centuries. For example, Malaysia's constitution (adopted at independence as the Constitution of Malaya in 1957) reflects a balance of ethnic differences (specifically Malay, Chinese, and Indian), but gives special status to Malays (*bumiputra* policy) and to Islam. Although Malaysia is not an Islamic state, and Islamic *shariah* law is not imposed on non-Muslims, Islam does have a privileged status vis-à-vis other religions. Islamic revivalism is a significant force in a society which is simultaneously experiencing rapid economic development.

After attaining independence from Spain in the nineteenth century, several Latin American countries maintained a privileged position for the Catholic Church in official status, education, and other ways. While this continues in many places, the *de facto* practice of religious tolerance and pluralism has advanced due to changes that are political, ecclesiastical, and social in origin. A complex but interesting case is that of Mexico, which adopted a constitution in 1917 that specifically sought to break down the institutional power of the Catholic Church. Only with the new constitution of 1992 and subsequent legal changes has the practice of religion and freedom of religious bodies been officially enhanced. Meanwhile, activism by believers in applying various aspects of the social doctrine of the Church has led to tensions and confrontations between ecclesiastical representatives and various levels of government. In recent decades, while Latin American societies have seen an increase in religious diversity and public freedoms for ethnic and religious minorities, they have simultaneously been experiencing rapid political and social change.

If one sees global politics being transformed by trends of democratization and open societies, the normative importance of

tolerance and freedom from the point of view of cultures and religions is highlighted. It is not just goods and money, but people and ideas that cross traditional borders. Normative globalization involves the adoption and deepening of the values of freedom and tolerance that are brought down from the realm of lofty abstract principles to practical issues in the interactions of people in the global neighborhood.

My argument is not that religious and cultural tolerance is or should be evaluated in terms of its instrumental usefulness for globalization. The historical ups and downs of social tolerance in various parts of the world have affected not only the legal and political norms in this field, but also the way conscious ideas about accepting differences have been formulated in modern history. However imperfectly freedom and tolerance have been put into practice, legal safeguards within polities have been established gradually in many parts of the world. Now with the advent of contemporary forms of globalization, the opportunity has increased for diverse cultures and religions to mix directly with each other and to face the challenge of practical steps toward toleration. Furthermore, awareness and scrutiny of how well human rights are achieved in distant places can affect diplomatic relations and economic policies toward those polities. Despite the progress evidenced by United Nations declarations and resolutions, numerous regional charters, and a variety of national laws on the matter, it would be stretching vocabulary to imagine that there is an effective global standard in even the law of tolerance, much less the practice. But recognition that religious minorities and diverse cultural groups deserve basic human rights is a source of transformation today that is part of the capacities that peoples of the Pacific Rim (and elsewhere) have for global politics. Without tolerance, frictions develop within and between polities that harm social and international relations.

*Fundamentalisms:* Given the widespread use of the term fundamentalism in discussing various groups, movements, and ideas at the intersection of politics and religion, some attention to this

phenomenon is appropriate, even if it is not a primary issue in the Pacific Rim. In particular, after the terrorist acts of September 11, 2001, many journalists have adopted the term “Islamic fundamentalism” as shorthand for many Islamist groups with a variety of religious, social, and political goals. The research associated with The Fundamentalism Project has helped to provide a more nuanced understanding of the meaning of fundamentalism for this investigation of capacities for global politics.<sup>3</sup>

While origin of the term fundamentalism can be traced to an American Christian publication in 1920 (Almond, Appleby, and Sivan 2003, p. 1), there are similar social phenomena today in different cultural and religious settings, especially among the Abrahamic faiths, that seem to fit the fundamentalism genus. Almond, Appleby, and Sivan note that some movements in which racial, ethnic, and religious goals commingle should be labeled *syncretic* rather than fundamentalist because they are based as much on ethnonationalism as on religion (p. 90). They exclude East Asian religions (Confucianism, in particular) because of a lack of mobilized and militant confrontation, and cults (such as Aum Shinrikyo in Japan) because of their obedience to a charismatic figure rather than a religious tradition or organized religious body (p. 91). They also exclude Pentecostalism in Latin America and elsewhere on conceptual grounds, even though some journalists apply the term fundamentalism in a loose sense to that case.

---

3 Numerous studies have been generated by The Fundamentalism Project, especially a series of volumes published by The University of Chicago Press, and edited by Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby in the 1990s. A recent synthetic work is that of Almond, Appleby, and Sivan (2003), which I will use here as a reference point. In that work, they use as a basis for cross-cultural and comparative research, the following definition: “*Fundamentalism, in this usage, refers to a discernible pattern of religious militance by which self-styled ‘true believers’ attempt to arrest the erosion of religious identity, fortify the borders of the religious community, and create viable alternatives to secular institutions and behaviors.*” (p. 17, italics in original)

Using this framework for a survey of the Pacific Rim, one can note fundamentalist groups particularly among Christians in North America and Muslims in Southeast Asia. A wider definition of fundamentalism that encompassed nationalist and primordialist ideologies might include ethnonationalist groups in various countries and cultures, as well, such as extremist groups in Japan. At the least, Muslim insurgencies in the Philippines and Thailand have links to fundamentalisms in a wider global scene. Political mobilization in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the United States has been affected by fundamentalist groups, as well. In these places, religious symbols and organizations have become an important focus for mobilization of political action, either directly or through other established political channels. This is not to say that fundamentalist movements are the only or dominant force in the political dynamics of those states, but that fundamentalisms have affected the domestic and international politics of those countries. In trying to specify capacities (both positive and negative) for global politics today, it is important to note the impact of such fundamentalisms.

*Ethnicity:* Ethnicity is a culturally based factor in politics around the Pacific Rim, including among others Indios communities in Mexico and Peru, blacks and Hispanics in the United States, indigenous peoples in Taiwan and Fiji, and ethnic groups in Aceh and Timor. Indeed, ethnicity is a charged element of personal and group identity and a moving force in many regions today. Independently of other material benefits or spiritual bonds, ethnicity as a valued identity motivates many people to become stakeholders in the political, social, and economic order. While many of the issues raised by ethnic groups have a local or regional character, some touch on matters of autonomy and self-determination of wider national and international significance.

Ethnicity raises some of the same questions as religion for polities: tolerance, group identity, equality. And, as with religion, ethnicity can create problems for both majority and minority groups. For example,

Malaysia's long-standing policy of affirmative action for majority ethnic Malays vis-à-vis those of Chinese, Indian, and other origins, has had some positive effects for the socio-economic status of Malays, but has also roused suspicions and stimulated controversy and violence. On Fiji, indigenous peoples have clashed with descendents of Indian origin over political power since the 1980s. Expressions of interest in independence by Taiwanese have sent powerful shock waves through global politics because of the People's Republic of China's avowal of a one-China policy that includes Taiwan Island. While ethnic appeals can strengthen the political focus of interest groups, in the absence of consociational democracy or other techniques of cooperation, ethnic forces can engage in conflicts which easily degenerate into negative capacities for polities.

*Convergence of religion and politics:* Finally, let me explain what I mean by the convergence of religion and politics as a value. Historically and culturally, there have been many types of relationship between politics and religion, from one-sided dominance, to barely indistinguishable overlap, to official separation, and so on. In any case, it is the same human person who has both political and religious identity and who relates to both spheres of human action. This is particularly significant for culture and society at the beginning of the twenty-first century, when the construction of public identity is a more self-conscious matter than it was for many people in earlier eras.

If anybody ever truly thought that politics and religion could be hermetically isolated from one another, surely the trends of the last few decades would prompt a thorough reevaluation of that stance. Modernization has not led to a withering of religious sentiment. Capitalism's creed has not won the hearts of the post-Cold War faithful. Rather, certain elements of today's globalization even seem to foster a convergence of politics with wider and deeper elements of culture and religion, as previous discussion of culture, ethnicity, religions, and fundamentalisms has shown. The ideas of religious and cultural

identity are made available to people through both technological advances that facilitate communication and through open spaces or new horizons for human interaction at a global level. The boundaries of nations and states have become more porous, even as global geopolitical and societal processes have contributed to the spread of the state system. Among today's political actors are international organizations, jihadist terror cells, and more. Cultural meaning for people in the contemporary world shows different forms of inclusion and exclusion from those found in ideal-type national societies. Religion has become more publicly oriented as a global space emerges. (Rudolph and Piscatori 1997; Berger 1999; Hecló and McClay 2003).

There is no simple resolution of the relationship between politics and religion today, nor was there one in the past. The two realms are distinct but not totally separate because they cannot be reified apart from the persons who think and act politically and religiously. One may speak of a tension between the two, a tension made specific by contemporary currents of globalization that affect people and polities everywhere. In this sense the Pacific Rim is only one of many global spaces in which this tension is experienced. The tension can be addressed through an engagement in the public square on the issues that bind the realms of religion and politics together, such as ethical questions and the organization of communities. This is a value of utmost priority in today's world.

## **V. Issues**

In this section I will discuss three issues—security, political economy, and public religion—in the Pacific Rim and demonstrate how religions and cultures generate capacities for global politics there. The former two are stock issues in the repertoire of international relations and international studies more generally, while the latter one has been treated less, though that defect has been overcome somewhat in recent

years. Capacities may be realized in action, or remain as potential forces in the political process. In either case, I suggest that global politics is involved, with dynamics peculiar to the globalized conditions of the contemporary world rather than limited to some national or local scene.

*Security:* Traditional questions of state security are involved in the confrontations between the divided nations of East Asia, China and Korea. The involvement of other powers, including the United States, Russia, and Japan is evident, but both the China-Taiwan and South Korea-North Korea dyads show how cultural and ethnic capacities in the dyads themselves exert a powerful influence on security issues. Despite various incidents and disputes, these polities have avoided major war for several decades. Economic ties between mainland China and Taiwan have grown among people with shared family and cultural bonds. Within a wider regional and global economy, and with ethnic Chinese connections throughout Southeast Asia and beyond, these bonds explain much about the past maintenance of security between the antagonists despite their geopolitical confrontation. Likewise, the two Koreas, while hostile and wary, have demonstrated particularly over the last decade that their ethnic and cultural affinity keeps them talking to each other sufficiently to overcome the most destabilizing insecurities in their own relationship and in the changing world around them.

Terrorism is another major item on the global security agenda, not least in the Pacific Rim. Clearly, some of the negative capacities for security (or sources of insecurity) relating to terrorism, especially in Southeast Asia, are linked to groups with religious as well as political ambitions. Among perpetrators of insecurity in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand are Islamist terrorist networks. While there are no simple solutions to overcoming these religiously-inspired groups, positive religious understanding and cooperation at local and global levels could significantly undercut their negative impact and advance

security throughout the region.

*Political economy:* Attention to cultural and religious variables as clues to a deeper understanding of capacities for global political economy issues is a difficult task. The Protestant Ethic and Confucian Ethic arguments have been introduced briefly above. A contemporary “religion market” view of economic growth finds a positive effect of some religious beliefs on economic growth (Barro and McCleary 2003; Kliesen and Schmid 2004). Chua’s analysis of market-dominant ethnic minorities as a source of global instability challenges received views of the beneficial effects of free markets (Chua 2004). I will note briefly some issues of political economy in the Pacific Rim that relate to these views.

The economic growth of not only Japan and China, but also the “four tigers” of South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore, is behind the attention given to cultural factors in economic development studies of the region. Although there are important differences among these societies, they do share some common elements of Confucian morality. A similar question is posed in the context of overseas Chinese economic prowess throughout Southeast Asia and beyond. While the effects of these cultural and religious factors on economic behavior may be hard to quantify, their coincidence seems more than accidental.

Structural penetration of the Latin American economy by firms from the United States and other origins is well known. How this is related to the cultural and religious interpenetration that has advanced throughout the region in recent decades is less clear. Among Latin American states the historical bonds of religion and culture certainly enhance their capacities for international economic cooperation among themselves. Furthermore, with the increased ease of transportation and communication between North and South America, shared social attitudes toward work and productivity, transmitted by a process of cultural emulation and direct movement of people, may well be occurring. In addition, the common culture associated with the spread

of democratic ideas may be part of the dynamic of regional economic integration in the Americas, and indeed around the entire Pacific Rim.

In a broad evaluation of capacities for the global political economy, it is worth noting the ambivalent nature of ethnic entrepreneurs in the Pacific Rim and beyond. Chinese merchants in Southeast Asia, Japanese investors in Asia and elsewhere, and American businessmen throughout the region bring with them the potential for access to capital, technological know-how, and markets. At the same time, cries of “Yankee Go Home,” anti-Japanese demonstrations, and riots targeting ethnic Chinese demonstrate that cultural frictions can be explosive sources of negative capacities, as well.

*Public religion:* Finally a few remarks on the significance of public religion in the Pacific Rim will bring to a close this examination of some issues that illustrate how religions and cultures affect capacities for global politics. The Islamic resurgence that has spilled over into Islamist terrorism in bombings in Indonesia, rebellion in the Philippines, and regional unrest in Thailand is perhaps the most dramatic case in point. In an intergovernmental context, Prime Minister Mahathir of Malaysia played an active role in the Organization of the Islamic Conference, bringing public religion into global issues of the highest order, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the international financial system. At the level of popular political culture, both moderate and radical Islamic political parties have engaged in democratic competition in Southeast Asian countries.

The Japanese state after World War II has tried to portray itself as religiously neutral, and it is often viewed that way from abroad. And yet it is frequently embroiled in international controversy with neighboring Asian states precisely over religious observances. In particular, the enshrinement of Japanese war dead at the Yasukuni Shrine, a Shinto shrine in Tokyo, includes those condemned as Class A war criminals at the Tokyo International War Crimes Trials. When Japanese Prime Ministers and other government officials pay their

respects at the Shrine in periodic visits,<sup>4</sup> the response in states that were victims of Japanese aggression during World War II includes strong diplomatic protests and strains on official and private ties. The symbolic power of this religious rite remains great to this day.

The impact of Christian movements and lobbies in domestic and international politics is nothing new in North America, Latin America, and the Philippines. In recent decades, some of the issues that have been prominent on their agenda include human rights, population policies, and freedom of religion. Even in South Korea, a country in which Christian adherents are now approaching half the total population, domestic Christian groups (with significant international ties), and other religiously-based groups, played an important role in anti-government mobilization during the period of authoritarian rule before the late 1980s; they continue to take prominent public actions on social issues today. How Christianity may be acquiring a public face in China has been the subject of recent studies (Kindopp and Hamrin 2004; Aikman 2003), including speculation that it may be one of the important transformative factors in Chinese society and politics for the future.

## **VI. Concluding Remarks**

Global politics has changed significantly with the end of the Cold War, new challenges posed by terrorism, and the processes of contemporary globalization. Yet these developments also serve to highlight the importance of forces that affect the world's peoples over a longer term, especially religions and cultures. Capacities for global

---

4 For a discussion of Japanese religion and nationalism that offers historical background to the issue, see Fridell (1983). Protests against these visits to the Yasukuni Shrine are particularly vehement in other Confucian cultures with strong traditions of reverence for ancestors. [This point was made by Richard Devine in a discussion on the subject in November 2005.]

politics, sources of and resources for transforming actions, both positive and negative, are found in these forces. People experience power, identity, and meaning in their cultures and religions that drive current trends and provide potential for the future.

In this survey of how these forces are at work in the Pacific Rim, it has become clear that religions and cultures deserve a more central place in the theoretical space of global political thought than the overlooked corner to which they are often relegated. The basic values that are at stake in political life can be appreciated better through an explicit recognition of these factors. As interdependencies and encounters increase in a global space, the identities formed by cultures and religions assume a more conspicuous role in ongoing processes of change. My reflections on issues of security, political economy, and public religion serve to exemplify how this occurs. If religions and cultures are the tectonic plates of global politics, theoretical constructs of global politics must explicitly recognize the massive forces that these variables exert. Otherwise, the constructs risk tumbling down.

Author's note: An earlier version of this paper was presented at the International Studies Association 46th Annual Convention, Honolulu, Hawaii, U.S.A., March 2, 2005.

## **REFERENCES**

- Aikman, David. (1986) *Pacific Rim: Area of Change, Area of Opportunity*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
- Aikman, David. (2003) *Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity Is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power*. Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing.
- Almond, Gabriel A., Appleby, R. Scott, and Sivan, Emmanuel. (2003) *Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalisms around the World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Appleby, R. Scott. (2000) *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Barro, Robert J., and McCleary, Rachel M. (2003) "Religion and Economic Growth Across Countries," *American Sociological Review*, 68(5), 760ff.
- Berger, Peter L. (ed.). (1999) *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*. Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center/ Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans.
- Berger, Peter L. (2002) "Introduction," in Berger and Huntington (2002).
- Berger, Peter L., and Hsiao, Hsin-Huang Michael (eds.). (1988) *In Search of an East Asian Development Model*. New Brunswick: Transaction Books.
- Berger, Peter L., and Huntington, Samuel P. (eds.). (2002) *Many Globalizations: Cultural Diversity in the Contemporary World*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Beyer, Peter. (1994) *Religion and Globalization*. London: Sage Publications.
- Braudel, Fernand. (1994) *A History of Civilizations*. Translated by Richard Mayne. New York: Allan Lane, The Penguin Press.
- Buzan, Barry, and Little, Richard. (2000) *International Systems in World History: Remaking the Study of International Relations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Casanova, José. (1994) *Public Religions in the Modern World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Chua, Amy. (2004) *World on Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Danchin, Peter G. (2002) "U.S. Unilateralism and the International Protection Of Religious Freedom: The Multilateral Alternative," *Columbia Journal of Transnational Law*. 41(1), 33-135.

- Drinan, Robert F. (2004) *Can God and Caesar Coexist? Balancing Religious Freedom and International Law*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Fox, Jonathan. (2001) "Religion as an Overlooked Element of International Relations", *International Studies Review*. 3(3), 53-73.
- Fridell, Wilbur M. (1983) "Modern Japanese Nationalism: State Shinto, the Religion That Was 'Not a Religion,'" in Peter H. Merkl and Ninian Smart, eds., *Religion and Politics in the Modern World*. New York: New York University Press.
- Giddens, Anthony. (2000) *Runaway World: How Globalization Is Reshaping our Lives*. New York: Routledge.
- Hecló, Hugh, and McClay, Wilfred M. (eds.). (2003) *Religion Returns to the Public Square: Faith and Policy in America*. Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; and Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Howell, Clifford. (1952) *Of Sacraments and Sacrifice*. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1952.
- Human Development Report 2004: Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World*. (2004) New York: United Nations Development Programme.
- Hurd, Elizabeth Shakman. (2004) "The Political Authority of Secularism in International Relations," *European Journal of International Relations*. 10(2), 235-262.
- Inayatullah, Naeem, and Blaney, David L. (2004) *International Relations and the Problem of Difference*. New York: Routledge.
- Iriye, Akira. (2002) *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Jackman, Robert W. (1993) *Power without Force: The Political Capacity of Nation-States*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Juergensmeyer, Mark. (1993) *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Juergensmeyer, Mark (ed.). (2003) *Global Religions: An Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kim Il Gon (金日坤). (1984) 『儒教文化圏の秩序と経済』 名古屋大学出版会.
- Kindopp, Jason, and Hamrin, Carol Lee (eds.). (2004) *God and Caesar in China: Policy Implications of Church-State Tensions*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.
- Kliesen, Kevin L., and Frank A. Schmid. (2004) "Fear of Hell Might Fire Up the Economy," *The Regional Economist* (July 2004, publication of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis), accessed Feb 12, 2005 at: <http://stlouisfed.org/publications/>
- Lapid, Yosef, and Kratochwil, Friedrich (eds.). (1996) *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.
- Morgenthau, Hans J. (1967) *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Mozaffari, Mehdi (ed.). (2002) *Globalization and Civilizations*. London: Routledge.
- Petito, Fabio, and Hatzopoulos, Pavlos (eds.). (2003) *Religion in International Relations: The Return from Exile*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Philpott, Daniel. (2001) *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern International Relations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Robertson, Roland. (1992) *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Rosenau, James N., and Czempiel, Ernst-Otto (eds.). (1992) *Governance without Government: Order and Change in World Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rudolph, Susanne Hoeber, and Piscatori, James (eds.). (1997) *Transnational Religions and Fading States*. Boulder: Westview.
- Thomas, Scott M. (2003) "Taking Religious and Cultural Pluralism Seriously: The Global Resurgence of Religion and the

Transformation of International Society,” in *Petito and Hatzopoulos (2003)*.

Thomas, Scott M. (2004) *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations: The Struggle for the Soul of the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Wessels, David. (1993) “International Cooperation Theory,” *Bulletin of the Faculty of Foreign Studies, Sophia University*, 28, 189-214.

Wessels, David. (1998) “Contemporary Governance,” *Bulletin of the Faculty of Foreign Studies, Sophia University*. 33, 221-243.