

“Outwitting the ‘Developed’ Countries?”
The International Politics of Existential Insecurity and the Global
Resurgence of Religion*

Scott M. Thomas
Department of Economics & International Development
University of Bath, United Kingdom

“Underdevelopment is also a state of mind, and understanding it as a state of mind, or as a form of consciousness, is the critical problem. Understanding development as a state of mind occurs when mass needs are converted to the demand for new brands of packaged solutions which are forever beyond the reach of the majority.”¹

- Ivan Illich

“Thus, when we tackle the greatest of all evolutionary questions about human existence – how, when, and why did we emerge on the tree of life; and were we meant to arise, or are we only lucky to be here – our *prejudices* often overwhelm our *limited information*. Some of these biased descriptions are so venerable, so reflexive, *so much a part of our second nature*, that *we never stop to recognize their status as social decisions with radical alternatives* – and view them instead as *given and obvious truths* (emphasis added).”²

- Stephen Jay Gould

We live in a world that is not supposed to exist. Religion was supposed to decline with modernization and economic development. Depending on your preferred version of history, Marxist or socialist ideology were supposed to mobilize the wretched of earth to overthrow capitalism and imperialism, or capitalism and liberal democracy were supposed to transform the world.³ Yet over the past thirty years, to the surprise of Western social scientists and policy-makers, it has been religion rather than secular ideology that has increasingly mobilized people in developing countries. This global resurgence of religion has

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¹ Ivan Illich, “Outwitting the ‘Developed’ Countries,” in Charles K. Wilber (ed.), *The Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment* (New York: Random House, 1973), 404.

² Stephen Jay Gould, *Life’s Grandeur: The Spread of Excellence from Plato to Darwin* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1996), 8.

³ Gordon White, et. al., *Revolutionary Socialist Development in the Third World* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books, 1983); Michael Mandelbaum, *The Ideas That Conquered the World: Peace, Democracy, and Free Markets in the Twenty-first Century* (Oxford, Public Affairs, 2002).

transformed foreign policy debates over diplomacy, national security, democracy promotion, and development assistance.⁴

During the past decade a variety of scholars of international relations have examined the global resurgence of religion. Various concepts – religious radicalism, extremism, militancy, revivalism, resurgence, and fundamentalism, have been used to label, define, or describe this global religious phenomena. Scholars simply do not agree on what these concepts are supposed to convey about religion, what social or political groups they are talking about – the BJP in India, the AKP in Turkey, Egypt’s Muslim Brothers, and the Moral Majority or the Christian Coalition in the United States, nor what they are supposed to convey about religion and politics or religion and international relations. This problem can be seen in The Fundamentalist Project, the recent, massively-funded research project on religion worldwide. It seemed to assume that almost any kind of serious religiosity was the same as “fundamentalism,” and this remains a popular way of interpreting religion in international relations.⁵ One of the main contentions of this article is that fundamentalism is a more limited, less useful, conception of the role of religion in international affairs than is the global resurgence of religion.

However, the concept of a global resurgence of religion has been challenged by a revised version of the theory of secularization. Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart argue, in contrast to the orthodox secularization theory, that the world *is* at least as religious as it was several decades ago, and they even concede that religious traditions around the world *are* becoming stronger. This does not lead them to discard the theory of secularization, but to revise it, and to try to make it relevant for studying religion and politics in the twenty-first century.⁶

⁴ Scott M. Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations: the struggle for the soul of the twenty-first century* (New York and London: Palgrave, 2005).

⁵ G. John Ikenberry, for example, in his review of Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (Cambridge, 2004), sums up the conventional wisdom by saying, “a resurgence of religiosity and religious fundamentalism seems to have reversed the global trend toward secularization.” Norris and Inglehart seem to use the terms “fundamentalist” and “evangelical” interchangeably, or more confusingly, “fundamentalist Evangelical churches” (241), even though there are key religious and political differences between them, and these terms relate to different communities, which seem to indicate a lack of basic familiarity with religion. G. John Ikenberry, *Foreign Affairs*, 83, 6 (2004): 143; David Aikman, “The Great Revival: Understanding Religious Fundamentalism,” *Foreign Affairs*, 82, 4 (2003): 188-193.

⁶ Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

In order to bring the theory of secularization up to date they propose the thesis of existential insecurity. They insist that in many parts of the world, in the North or the developed countries, secularization is still spreading. Religion continues to lose its social and political significance as a consequence of modernization and human development, except in those areas where there is a lack of “existential security.” Existential insecurity is something broadly but not exclusively experienced by people in the developing countries (poor communities in developed countries also experience it). In other words, when people *feel* relatively secure and comfortable with their material surroundings – like most people in the developed world, then everything else being equal, there will be a decline in religion – as has happened in all Western countries, except the United States (which, possibly, in addition to Italy and Ireland, is supposed to be the great exception to secularization theory). The opposite is also the case, so where individual and social well-being are at *risks* – mainly, the developing world, due to natural disasters, economic hardship, disease, and political instability, the values of traditional religion are at least as strong as they were a century ago.

Thus, a new type of North-South divide, an expanding *secular-sacred gap*, is taking place in the world, making cultural and religious pluralism one of the main problems of international relations in the twenty-first century.⁷ Significantly, Norris and Inglehart do not support Samuel P. Huntington’s thesis on the clash of civilizations. They show that the Western world and the Islamic world are *not* divided over support for democratic values (the neo-conservatives, in other words, at least got that part of the argument right), but they *are* divided over cultural matters – sex and gender, and so the “culture wars” in U.S. politics are now a part of international politics.

What are we to make of the existential insecurity thesis given the impact of religion on world politics we can see and read about in the news media every day? Norris and Inglehart have produced a valuable study based on the *World Values Surveys* (1981-2001), which is a systematic, cross-national, comparison of views of the “mass public” gathered from almost 80 different countries. They have derived broad conclusions regarding religion, security, politics, and secularization worldwide. Their case studies include only the U.S.,

⁷ Norris and Inglehart conclude their study by saying, “In the post-Cold War world, the widening gap between the core values held by the more religious and more secular societies will probably increase the salience and importance of cultural issues in international affairs. How well we manage to accommodate and tolerate these cultural differences, or how far we fail, remains one of the core challenges of the twenty-first century.” Norris and Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular*, 241.

Europe, and the Islamic world. Key omissions, as we will see, are Africa, China, and Latin America – where Pentecostal and evangelical Protestantism are rapidly expanding.

Micro-levels case studies, they acknowledge at various points, would provide insights that go far beyond what they have considered, and this turns out to be a major problem with their study.⁸ We will see that a gap exists between the study's broad conclusions, and what is indicated by the case studies. This raises serious questions about the concepts and assumptions used to formulate the surveys, and to interpret the survey data. They may have used the best data we have so far, and it provides much useful information, but it is questionable whether what is being surveyed and interpreted adequately captures "lived religion," what is taking place among religious people on the ground, with their complex mix of religious symbols, practices, and discourses. Western scholars have been too obsessed with "religious observation," and have reduced "religiosity" to the frequency of people performing *their* preferred set of observed or proxy indicators, or indicators preferred by religious establishments, which, in raises the question, in these post-modern times, whose religion is it, anyway?⁹

The second thing to say about this study is that, to some extent, the thesis of existential insecurity is not a new idea, but a rather old one. It is at least as old as Cotton Mather (1663-1728), one of the great preachers of the Massachusetts Bay colony, who famously lamented, "religion brought forth prosperity, and the daughter destroyed the mother."¹⁰ However, this article argues that a kind of cyclical view of religious resurgence, even though it is still a popular explanation of religion, does not capture the particularities of the religious resurgence in a global era that make it a more enduring feature of world politics in the twenty-first century.

At this point in world history the experience of economic development in Europe and North America may not provide a very good perspective to assess what is happening in the global South – the developing world. The 21 post-industrial countries and 32 industrial countries included in the *World Values Surveys*, with the exception of Japan and Turkey, are arguably countries rooted in Christianity. The correlation between human development and

⁸ Norris and Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular*, 40, 240.

⁹ David D. Hall (ed.), *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Robert A. Orsi, "Is the Study of Lived Religion Irrelevant to the World We Live in?," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 42, 2 (2002): 169-174.

¹⁰ Paul Freston, "Christianity and World Affairs, Report to the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life" (December 2005, unpublished MSS).

secularization may be a limited connection between Christianity, human development, and secularization. This article will argue that Christianity is increasingly a non-Western religion, and so the existential insecurity thesis might be even more limited, i.e. it only might be applicable to Western Christianity and not to global Christianity, or to other religious traditions in the global South. This is why the first part of the article briefly examines what the concept of the global resurgence of religion is meant to convey about religion and world politics, and the implications of the demographics of the global resurgence of religion for world politics. If religion were supposed to lose social and political significance except where there is a lack of existential security – the global South, then by 2050 this “anomaly” or “exception” to the revised theory of secularization would comprise almost ninety percent of the people in the world.

The second part examines the challenges the global resurgence of religion poses for the way social theory has constructed almost *any* form of serious religiosity – simply as a extremism or fundamentalism, and a threat to democracy, development, and the international order. These general challenges – to the theories of secularization and modernization, to the political mythology of liberalism, and to the hegemony of social theory in the social sciences, casts doubt on the concepts and assumptions on which the thesis of existential insecurity is based, and the way they have been used to interpret religion and politics in the global South. Finally, given what has been said already, the third part of the article examines more fully the concepts and assumptions of the existential insecurity thesis. It explains why the concept of the global resurgence of religion, with its more holistic accounts of security and religion, offers a better way of interpreting the impact of religion in international relations.

THE POLITICS AND DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE GLOBAL RESURGENCE OF RELIGION

The global resurgence of religion is part of the long-term cultural shift in the role, form, and functions of religion caused by modernization and globalization. This cultural shift means that the religious resurgence and the globalization of religion are reshaping the

contours of the social and political landscape of international relations.¹¹ I use the word, “social” quite deliberately. If culture and religion are going to be taken seriously as social forces in international relations, then the first step is to realize that international relations is a *social world* of ideas, values, beliefs, and passions, as well as a material world of guns, missiles, battleships, trade, technology, and industrial production. It is *how* these material and ideational factors are related that we get the events of international relations.

The concept of the global resurgence of religion in the study of international relations can be defined in the following way:

The global resurgence of religion is the growing *saliency* and *persuasiveness* of religion, i.e. the increasing importance of *religious beliefs, practices, and discourses* in personal and public life, and the growing role of religious or religiously-related individuals, non-state groups, political parties, and communities, and organizations in domestic politics, and this is occurring in ways that have significant implications for international politics (emphasis added).¹²

What the concept of the global resurgence of religion is trying to convey – with its related ideas of saliency, persuasiveness, beliefs, practices, and discourses, is the ways politics and religion are *increasingly* mixed together around the world (this is what is meant by a resurgence). “Politics” in countries broadly conceived, including debates over policy, or the struggle for power by religiously-based, inspired, or informed interest groups, pressure groups, or political parties through (non-violent) elections, petitions, protests, marches, etc. This understanding of the resurgence of religion and politics is an increasingly observable and for many people a disturbing part of international affairs (since secularization was supposed to accompany modernization).

Religion has also been a key factor in more violent, contentious, forms of politics - protest, guerrilla warfare, or national liberation, although these forms of violence can spill over into terrorism. The role of spirit mediums, for example, is a forgotten part of the tactics of guerrilla warfare used during the liberation struggle for Zimbabwe in the 1970s,¹³ as is the role of religion in a variety of other African struggles, or the role of Buddhist movements during the Vietnam War.¹⁴ In our time most widely known are the *mujabideen*, the Islamic

¹¹ Ken R. Dark, "Religious Change in World Politics," in Ken. R. Dark (ed.), *Religion and International Relations* (London: Macmillan, 2000), 50-75.

¹² Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion*, 26.

¹³ David Lan, *Guns and Rain: Guerrillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe* (London: James Currey, 1985).

¹⁴ Adam Roberts, "Buddhism and politics in South Vietnam," *The World Today*, June 1965, 240-250.

fighters, in Afghanistan, and, later on in Kashmir, Bosnia, Kosovo, Chechnya, and more recently in Somalia, Kenya, Morocco, and the Philippines. Many of these more recent Islamic movements, encouraged by the war in Iraq, globalization, and the spread of Muslim diaspora communities, have spilled over into forms of Al-Qaeda-linked or inspired forms of Islamic terrorism.¹⁵

Thus, the power of religion continues to shape people's private and public identities in ways that are crucial for international relations and international development. A variety of political events and religious or religiously motivated social movements have led to this growing scholarly and popular inquiry into the impact of religion on international affairs. Chart 1 is an inclusive, if not an exhaustive, list of key events that can be interpreted as a part of the global resurgence of religion:

Chart 1 The Global Resurgence of Religion

- Solidarity and the Catholic Church in Poland, the Protestant churches in East Germany, and the role of the church in the end of communism in the rest of Eastern Europe
- Revival of Orthodoxy in Russia, and the rise of Islam in the former parts of the Soviet union
- The role of liberation theology, base Christian communities in the grass-roots struggles against dictatorships, esp. in Brazil, El Salvador, and Nicaragua, the rise of Pentecostalism, and evangelicalism in Africa, Latin America (e.g. Brazil, Nicaragua, El Salvador), and other parts of the developing world.
- The rise of evangelicals and the Christian Right in the United States.
- Iranian Revolution, the growing Shia Islamic revival, Islamic fundamentalism, September 11, 2001, Al-Qaeda, and the spread of Islamic terrorism in Europe, Africa, Central Asia, South Asia, and South-East Asia.
- New Age spirituality in Western Europe, and the growing role of religion in European politics
- The growth of religious political parties in the Islamic world
- Ethno-religious conflict in the Balkans, Somalia, West Africa, the Caucasus, and elsewhere.
- The growing role of religious groups, organizations, and institutions on the emerging environmental consciousness – “peace, justice, and the integrity of creation,” and on global environmental issues

¹⁵ Andrew England, “Morocco’s breeding ground for bombers,” *Financial Times*, May 5/6, 2007.

A number of central features characterize the global resurgence of religion. **First**, the religious resurgence is global in a **geographic** sense. It is not confined to any particular region of the world, the American South, Africa, Central Asia, or the Middle East. The global resurgence of religion is widely recognized as a key part of the global South (a key part of the existential insecurity thesis). The *religious* resurgence is following a massive, general *demographic* shift in population from the developed countries in the North – Europe, North America, the lands of the former Soviet Union, to the developing countries. The North accounted for 32% of the world’s population in 1900, 29% in 1950, 25% in 1970, about 18 percent in 2000, and it is estimated that the North will account for only 10-12% of the world’s population in 2050.¹⁶ In the twenty-first century the West or the North is becoming more and more *post-Christian* (one of the contentions of the existential insecurity thesis, although it is not put this way), and this is why the future of Europe is one of the main concerns of the Catholic Church under Benedict XVI.

It is crucial for scholars of international relations to recognize that *Christianity in the global South is becoming more and more post-Western*.¹⁷ This is crucial for understanding how the cultural and religious landscape of world politics is changing, and what this cultural shift will mean for international relations and international development. We can no longer assume, rather parochially, that Christianity in Europe, or even Anglo-Saxon evangelicalism, will determine the global future of Christianity.¹⁸ Scholars of international relations often juxtapose terms such as “the Islamic world” and “the West,” with the idea that the “the West,” at least in a cultural sense, still represents Christianity. The reality is that *Christianity*, apart possibly from Latin America (which really includes a variety of cultures, indigenous as well as European), and the small minorities of Christians in the Middle East, *is increasingly a post-Western religion, dominated by peoples and countries of the global South*. The Christian Right and evangelicalism in the United States – despite what some of their leaders may claim, are not the same as global evangelicalism or the same as the Christianity of the global South. If U.S.

¹⁶ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

¹⁷ Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2003), cited in Paul Freston, “Third World Evangelical Politics in Global Perspective Post-2001” (unpublished MSS, 2005).

¹⁸ Paul Freston, *Evangelicals and Politics in Asia, Africa, and Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 4.

policy-makers now feel that Islam is the most urgent challenge for foreign policy, it may be the case that the politics of global Christianity over the long haul will be as important.¹⁹

Second, the global resurgence of religion is also taking place throughout the world in countries with the main world religious and cultural traditions – Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. The rise in Orthodox Judaism, for example, in Israel and the United States (displacing more liberal Jewish secularism), is having an impact on politics in both countries. Remarkably, given their Marxist pasts, genuine religious revivals are going on in China and in Russia. Christianity is exploding in China, which comprises a fifth of the world’s population, and the state now encourages religion, even if it is for its own ends - social order amidst a rapid economic development. China, as we will see, has one of the largest numbers of Pentecostal and evangelical Christian populations in the world, which highlights the importance of *non-Western Christianity for world politics*.²⁰ Christianity in the global South, as we will see, has Weberian implications for the spreading of the “Protestant ethic” or something like it in these countries, and for the values that support democracy and capitalist development.

A genuine religious revival of Orthodox Christianity is also taking place in Russia. The Russia Orthodox Church’s recent unification of its domestic and overseas hierarchies, a legacy of the Soviet era, and closer church-state relations, facilitated by “petro-populism” or “oil nationalism,” has established the religious and political foundations for Orthodox identity politics - a greater role of Russia and Russian Orthodox Church on the world stage.²¹

However, the world religions where we can really see explosions of religious fervour are the global Islamic resurgence and the global spread of Pentecostal and evangelical Protestantism. The global Islamic resurgence is a genuine Islamic revival, and it is more wide-ranging than Islamic fundamentalism. There is a visible return to Islam – it can be observed, in dress (the veil for women, a beard for men), prayers, rituals, etc. in various countries that

¹⁹ Paul Freston, “Christianity and World Affairs, Report to the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life” (December 2005, unpublished MSS).

²⁰ David Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity Is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power* (Monarch Books, second revised edition 2006).

²¹ David Holley, “Russian Orthodox Church mends global schism-Overseas church that refused Soviet control formally reunites with homeland hierarchy in Moscow,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 17, 2007. Christopher Marsh (ed.), *Burden or Blessing? Russian Orthodoxy and the Construction of Civil Society and Democracy* (Boston, MA, Institute on Culture, Religion, and World Affairs, 2004). Mark Trumbull, “Risks of rising oil nationalism,” *Christian Science Monitor*, April 3, 2007; Sara Miller Llana, “Rising censorship among world’s oil powers,” *Christian Science Monitor*, May 24, 2007.

make up the Islamic world.²² A key part of this revival, at the grass roots, is that people want Islam in some sense – and, this is what is up for debate, discussion, or more violent confrontation, to be the organizing principle in their lives and also in their society (for example, the riots and politics over the *contested meanings of Islam and secularism* in Turkey in 2007, which is a theoretical point we will return to).²³ The fact that global Islamic revivalism is often anti-Western does not detract from the *religious* reality of Islamic revivalism (globalization has facilitated a sense of a wider Islamic identity and concern for foreign affairs in the Islamic world).

Table 1
The Islamic World
Muslim Population by Country

Rank	Country	Muslim Population	% Muslim
1	Indonesia	213,469,356	88.22%
2	India	174,862,240	16.2%
3	Pakistan	162,487,489	98%
4	Bangladesh	129,681,509	88%
5	Egypt	70,530,237	91%
6	Turkey	68,963,953	99.8%
7	Iran	67,337,681	99%
8	Nigeria	64,385,994	50%
9	Ethiopia	37,533,500	50%
10	Morocco	32,300,410	98.7%
11	Algeria	32,206,534	99%
12	Afghanistan	29,629,697	99%
13	Saudi Arabia	26,417,599	100%
14	Sudan	26,121,865	65%
15	Iraq	25,292,658	97%

SOURCE: CIA World FACT BOOK, 2005

The Islamic world is far larger than the Arab world, and stretches across the globe to Indonesia, which is quite probably the Muslim country with the largest population (Table 1). In fact, the largest Muslim countries are non-Arab, and are outside the Middle East, which

²² Jill Carroll, “Young Muslims in Cairo transform the *hijab*,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, May 16, 2007.

²³ Peter L. Berger, “Religion in a Globalizing World,” Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, December 4, 2006.

qualifies any quick generalizations about Islam and take your pick – women, terrorism, democracy, capitalism, etc. Three of the largest Muslim countries are in South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh), and one (Indonesia) is in East Asia, but Turkey (in Europe) is also on the top list, so if Turkey joins the EU, the EU will have as a member one of the largest Muslim countries in the world. By current projections Nigeria, as a Muslim country (or at least a country almost evenly split population between Muslims and Christians) will have a larger population than Pakistan or Bangladesh in 2050, and so Nigeria will become one of the largest Muslim countries in the world. Osama bin Laden understands the demographics of religion and world politics since in 2003 he called on his followers to focus on Nigeria.²⁴

The global spread of Pentecostalism and evangelical Protestantism is the most dramatic religious explosion in the world today. It used to be thought that Pentecostal or evangelical Christianity were mainly private and personal (i.e. they fit with the theory of secularization), and that its followers were largely apolitical in their outlook. We will see that this view needs considerable rethinking. “If so, then Pentecostalism’s growing numbers will almost certainly guarantee that the movement will be a major force in shaping the political as well as the religious landscape of the 21st century.”²⁵

Pentecostalism is rapidly spreading across the world, and is remaking the face of global Christianity According to the *World Christian Database* there may be as many as 250 million Pentecostals, or one-eighth of the world's 2 billion Christians are thought to be Pentecostals, ranking second in number of adherents only to Catholicism, and so Pentecostals comprise about one in twenty-five of the global population.²⁶

²⁴ IISS, *Strategic Survey*, 2006, 251.

²⁵ Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, “Spirit and Power: A Ten-Country Survey of Pentecostals” (October 2006), vi.

²⁶ David Martin, *Pentecostalism: The World their Parish* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 1.

Table 2
Pentecostals by Country

Rank	Pentecostal Population		
1	China	72.0 million	unknown
2	USA	20.2 million	30 million
3	Brazil	15.0 million	20-90 million
4	Nigeria	13.0 million	34.5-41.0 million
5	Philippines	9.0 million	35.0-38.6 million
6	Indonesia	7.0 million	
7	India	5.2 million	38.0-54.0 million

SOURCE: Operation World, 2000; World Christian Database

Evangelical Protestantism has been exploding in Latin America since the 1960s, so much so that at one time scholars thought the continent was turning Protestant, which still may happen in certain countries. Latin America has probably over 50 million Protestants, probably 75-85% of which are Pentecostals.²⁷ Pentecostalism is also sweeping across Africa, and in peculiar places like Nepal, which is a Hindu kingdom.²⁸ Three of the countries with the largest Muslim populations - Indonesia, India, and Nigeria, as we can see in Tables 1 and 2, are also countries with the largest number of Pentecostal Christians, which is already putting strains on the traditions of Muslim-Christian tolerance in these countries.

Pentecostalism is at the cutting edge of Christian growth in China, South Korea, Thailand, and Vietnam. This region is constantly referred to as the Pacific Rim, but how much would it change our image of world politics, and the prospects for conflict in East Asia, if we recognized that the Pacific Rim could also be called the “Christian arc” above Muslim Indonesia, the country with largest Muslim population in the world?²⁹ The media often casts Islam as the defining religion of the developing world, but it really is not possible to talk about global resurgence of Islam without also talking about the global spread of evangelical Protestantism.³⁰

²⁷ “Spirit and Power,” iii, 1.

²⁸ Bal Krishna Sharma, “A History of the Pentecostal Movement in Nepal,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, 4, 2 (2001): 295-305.

²⁹ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

³⁰ Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 5.

Thus, the global spread of Christianity is shifting its center of gravity from the industrialized countries to the developing world. The majority of Christians in the world by 2050 will be non-white, non-Western, from the colonized world, rather than the colonizers, and will espouse forms of Christianity that are more emotive and charismatic than those found in the West. What is more, many of these Christians will be living as *minorities* under non-Christian and often hostile regimes. We will see, given the *changing* demographics of Islam and Christianity, that this will make Muslim-Christian relations, and religious freedom increasingly important issues in international politics in the twenty-first century.

The existential insecurity thesis argues that religion will continue to lose social and political significance as a result of modernization, except where there is a lack of existential security. The demographics of the global resurgence of religion indicate that by 2050 this “anomaly” or “exception” would comprise almost ninety percent of the people in the world. The growing body of case studies of Pentecostalism and Islamic revivalism mentioned later in this article hardly qualify these religious social movements as the “selected anomalies” or “anecdotal evidence” Norris and Inglehart believe can be discounted as part of their revisionist theory of secularization.³¹ How many anomalies do there have to be before a theory or paradigm is called into question? Indeed, as Peter Berger has wilyly observed, if an anomaly is something that deviates from what is to be expected according to existing theory, or according to what is most common, what needs to be explained is not the religiosity of the global South – where most of the people in the world live. What is anomalous and needs to be explained is the secularism of the tiny minority of people who live mainly in Europe and pockets of North America.³²

It seems rather heroic now, as well as Euro-centric, to assume that the experience of development of a tiny, white, Western, minority of Christians in the North – as important as this has been for the world civilization, must be inevitably the world’s future experience of development.³³ What the relationship between religion and modernity or post-modernity will be in the twenty-first century is the question that emerges from the demographics of the

³¹ Norris and Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular*, 4-5.

³² Peter L. Berger, “The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview,” in Peter L. Berger (ed.), *The Desecularization of the World* (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 1-18.

³³ Felipe Fernandez-Armesto argues we are living through one of the great historical transitions. After a period of Western dominance – which for some of us has seemed the way things were meant to be, the world is returning to where it was a millennium ago, to the world hegemony of Pacific-rim cultures. *Millennium: A History of the Last Thousand Years* (New York: Scribner, 1995).

global resurgence of religion. How this question is answered depends on (Western) social theory, the concepts, assumptions, and propositions regarding religion and modernity behind the thesis of existential insecurity.

GETTING BEYOND “FUNDAMENTALISM”?
SOCIAL THEORY AND THE CHALLENGES OF THE GLOBAL
RESURGENCE OF RELIGION

The global resurgence of religion poses a number of challenges for social theory and the way the religious resurgence is interpreted in international relations. First, the global resurgence of religion challenges the theory of secularization, the idea that religion will decline in social and political significance in the modern world. The global resurgence of religion can be identified with how we interpret the long-term cultural shifts taking place in international society. If secularization and modernization went together in the modern world, then religiosity or post-secularism may go together in a *global* post-modern world.

The classic theory of secularization, in the functionalist account going back to Durkheim, argued that modernization and industrialization created the values, conditions, and institutions necessary for secularization, and this account remains a key part of the thesis on existential insecurity. Social differentiation, the way the holistic forms of social life in traditional society were separated in social spheres in modern society – religion, family, education, health care, welfare, etc., and the rise of social and cultural pluralism contributed to the diversity, relativism, and egalitarianism that made the social functions of religious institutions in society no longer necessary. At the same time religion was increasingly rejected politically and ideologically (e.g. anti-clericalism of the French Revolution, and the Enlightenment).

In other words, religion would lose its social purpose in society. The role of religion in authorizing, integrating, legitimating, and operating social institutions was no longer needed in modern societies functionally integrated through other social institutions – political, economic, educational, social welfare, and administrative, etc. Religion would become a private hobby or leisure activity - like football or stamp collecting, in a society that

was increasingly secularized. It was simply no longer needed in societies with modern welfare states.³⁴

However, regardless of religion and the future of Europe, this does not appear to be what has been happening worldwide. The debate over whether Europe rather than the United States may turn out to be the exceptional case in the theory of secularization is not examined here. What is relevant, given the spread of Pentecostalism and Islamic revivalism, is that Europe may only illustrate what happens when social change occurs in societies where religion has been tied to *governments* – the state church, and to the old or *established elites* in society.³⁵

What seems to be taking place, as we will see in the case studies, is what Robert Wuthnow has called the “restructuring of religion” in a global era. Similarly, Peter Berger has called the kind of global cultural and religious shift taking place a change in the institutional location of religion. He argues, contrary to the orthodox theory, cultural and religious *pluralism* and modernization have *not* led to secularization (the European experience). They affect the “how of religious belief,” how religion is structured or organized (measured by the conventional indicators, i.e. religious membership, frequency of attendance at worship services, etc.), but not necessarily the “what of religious belief” around the world.³⁶

The global resurgence of religion is about the *globalization of pluralism* in world politics, i.e. the coexistence of different racial, ethnic, and religious groups, and the social interactions between them. Cultural and religious pluralism rather than secularization is now one of the most important *global social facts of world politics*.³⁷ The rapid spread of Pentecostalism and evangelicalism, and the Islamic resurgence in the global South is a *part* of this pluralist world, they are two of the main *global expressions of* modernity, rather than simply “fundamentalism,” constructed as a category to define social movements that are reactions

³⁴ Brian Wilson, *The Changing Functions of Religion: Toleration and Cohesion in the Secularized Society* (Maidenhead: Institute of Oriental Philosophy, 1991).

³⁵ Grace Davie, *Europe: The Exceptional Case* (London: Darton, Longman, Todd, 2002); Martin, *Pentecostalism*, 28-70.

³⁶ Norris and Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular*, 40-42, 53-79; Peter L. Berger, “Postscript,” in Linda Woodhead, Paul Heelas, David Martin (eds.), *Peter Berger and the Study of Religion* (London: Routledge, 2001), 189-199.

³⁷ Peter L. Berger and Samuel P. Huntington (eds.) *Many Globalizations: Cultural Diversity in the Contemporary World* (Oxford, 2002).

against modernity.³⁸ This is why cultural and religious pluralism, religious freedom, and inter-religious dialogue are becoming important issues in world politics (which Norris and Inglehart also acknowledge, but give demographic expansion, fundamentalism, and existential insecurity as the reasons).

The Western and European experience of modernization may not be indicative of the global future.³⁹ The European or Western path to modernity, and its construction of the analytical categories to examine religion and politics, may only be one of the pathways to modernity. The rise of China, the Pacific Rim, global evangelicalism, and the global Islamic revivalism indicate that there may be “multiple modernities,” many ways of being modern and multiple ways of conceiving how politics and religion are related in the twenty-first century.⁴⁰ Therefore, the long-term cultural shift taking place in world politics means the assumptions we make about “what it means to be modern” influences how we construct the concepts through which we interpret religion, politics, and international relations – modernity, post-modernity, secularization, religious radicalism, extremism, militancy, and fundamentalism.⁴¹

Second, the global resurgence of religion challenges the separation of politics and religion. This is different from institutional secularization or the separation of church and state. Evangelicals in Latin America today, like the Baptists, and other “dissenting churches” during the Reformation, believe separating church from state institutions increases religious freedom.⁴²

The idea that politics and religion need to be separated from public life to protect freedom and democracy is part of the political mythology of liberalism. The political mythology of liberalism is the myth of the modern secular state as our saviour from the horrors of modern wars of religion or clashes between civilizations. According to this

³⁸ Bruce Lawrence, *Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt Against the Modern Age* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1990).

³⁹ Paul Freston, “Third World Evangelical Politics in Global Perspective Post-2001” (unpublished MSS), citing David Martin, “Evangelical Expansion in Global Society,” in Donald Lewis (ed.), *Christianity Reborn* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 273-294.

⁴⁰ S.N. Eisenstadt, “The Reconstruction of Religious Arenas in the Framework of ‘Multiple Modernities,’” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 29, 3 (2000): 591-612.

⁴¹ John Gray, *Al Qaeda and What It Means to be Modern* (London: Faber & Faber, 2003).

⁴² Liberalism and republicanism, in the politics of Latin America in the nineteenth century, stood for progress, and church-state separation (disestablishment), which was not the same as the secularization of culture. Now, evangelicals and Pentecostals support church-state separation to allow them greater social space for evangelism, and political space to defend their interests in predominately Catholic countries.

political myth, what the wars of religion in early modern Europe indicate is that when religion is brought into domestic or international politics - when religion is “politicized” or “de-privatized” as a type of political theology or political religion, it inherently causes violence, intolerance, devastation, political upheaval, and the collapse of the international order. Therefore, the myth goes on to say, the state - the liberal or secular state, the separation of church and state, is needed to save us from the cruel and violent consequences of religion in domestic and international politics.⁴³

However, the political mythology of liberalism constitutes a hegemonic discourse or regime of truth as much as any other religious or secular ideology. Its strongest adherents often do not even recognize this, since for them it is “so much a part of our second nature,” as Stephen Jay Gould has put it, regarding the way culture – the Victorian doctrine of progress, crept into the theory of evolution. Political liberalism is just the way life is meant to be in the modern world.

In fact, political liberalism is a type of social tradition, as Alasdair MacIntyre understands this concept, as a historically extended and socially embodied debate or dialogue over the values or goods of the tradition.⁴⁴ The history of the political mythology of liberalism can be contested – the ideas that John Locke invented the modern concept of “toleration” or that the secular state is our saviour, but so can the political theory on which it is allegedly based. Both were a product of theology and politics, an intense *theo-political* debate in early modern Europe, a renegotiation of the boundaries of the sacred and the profane, which makes the idea of the (secular) state as the guardian of the “neutrality” of the public square part of the political mythology of liberalism.⁴⁵ These boundaries - over the political, as well as other social spheres, such as education, law, and social welfare, are being

43 William T. Cavanaugh, "The Myth of the State as Saviour," in William T. Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination: Discovering the Liturgy as a Political Act in an Age of Global Consumerism* (London & New York: Continuum, 2002), 9-52; Carl J. Nederman and John Christian Laursen (ed.), *Difference and Dissent: Theories of Tolerance in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996).

44 Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry* (London: Duckworth, 1990).

45 Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, “The Political Authority of Secularism in International Relations,” *European Journal of International Relations*, 10, 2 (2004): 235-264. Arguably, there is no neutral or “naked” public square, which in some cases in Europe the public square is not “non-religious,” but is positively an “irreligious” public square. Some European states are officially secular (France and Turkey), and others are not (United Kingdom), and the debates in Latin America, for example, over liberalism and republicanism often went hand in hand with a rejection of religion as backward, superstitious, and a bastion of irrationality. Nepal has recently (June 2006) changed its official status as a Hindu kingdom to that of a secular state as part of the political reforms ending the decade-long armed conflict between the Maoist rebels and the government.

contested, *as part of the contested politics of secularism* as much as by the resurgence of the *politics of religion*.⁴⁶ In other words, as we will see, the *religious* resurgence has often been in response to the *secular state's* expanding intrusions into new social and private spheres in domestic society.

The adherents of political mythology of liberalism perceive themselves to have a non-dogmatic, inclusive, tolerant, and pluralistic ideology. They are set against *any* kind of political group with a serious religious commitment that tries to apply its values and beliefs to public life. It simply cannot envision the possibility that “alternative non-secular democratic models of public order could function as legitimate rivals to secularism.”⁴⁷ The political mythology of liberalism forms the background to the way concepts such as religious radicalism, extremism, militancy, and fundamentalism are constructed.⁴⁸ It turns *any* kind of religion or serious religious commitment into a form of “extremism” or “fundamentalism” since religion in the modern world is only supposed to be a private hobby like stamp collecting, something which may give genuine personal satisfaction or consolation, but is dangerous and irrelevant to public life.⁴⁹ We vividly saw this at the time Jimmy Carter ran for president. The US media elites assumed Carter simply *had* to be a “fundamentalist” since – my gosh, he did weird things like pray, read the Bible, and teach Sunday School.⁵⁰

Norris and Inglehart use the term fundamentalist “to refer to those [people] with an absolute conviction in the fundamental principles of their faith, to the extent that they will not accept the validity of any other beliefs.”⁵¹ They seem to think this is a “neutral” definition, when it is not, for it not only side steps how theological traditions handle the way faith and doubt are related in a post-modern world (one of the things that separates evangelicals from fundamentalists), its alleged neutrality is part of the mythology of liberalism.⁵²

⁴⁶ Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, “Theorizing Religious Resurgence” (MSS, International Studies Association, 2007; *International Politics*, forthcoming, 2007).

⁴⁷ Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, “The Political Authority of Secularism in International Relations,” *European Journal of International Relations*, 10, 2 (2004): 235-264.

⁴⁸ William T. Cavanaugh, “The Myth of the State as Savior,” in William T. Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination: Discovering the Liturgy as a Political Act in an Age of Global Consumerism* (London & New York: Continuum, 2002), 9-52.

⁴⁹ Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

⁵⁰ Robert Wuthnow, “The World of Fundamentalism,” *The Christian Century*, April 22, 1992, 426-429.

⁵¹ Norris and Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular*, 255.

⁵² Oddly, Norris and Inglehart cite The Fundamentalist Project in their bibliography, but they do not use its definition of fundamentalism for their study. They do, however, cite the volumes to identify the religious resurgence as “fundamentalism,” and to link together as “fundamentalists movements” – Orthodox Judaism

The problem is that this definition defines a category that has very little analytical utility for interpreting the *World Values Survey*. Religion, as Norris and Inglehart define it, as we will see, is something inherently dogmatic, authoritarian, exclusive, and ideological. This turns any kind of serious religious commitment, for example, any type of “Islamism,” such as in Egypt the Muslim Brothers and the AKP in Turkey, as well as Hizb ut-Tahrir,⁵³ which in fact is now banned in many Islamic countries as a terrorist group, into a form of “fundamentalism,” which – like the concept of fascism, simply becomes a term of abuse, used to denigrate social or political groups assumed by adherents to the political mythology of liberalism to be a threat to peace, democracy, and social order. However, as we will see, the way these concepts are defined distorts and obscures what lived religion is, what is actually taking place in particular countries regarding religion and politics, with serious implications for foreign policy and development policy.

Third, the global resurgence of religion challenges the hegemony of social theory as a discourse in the study of religion in the social sciences. A variety of questions now concern the agenda of policy-makers - the role of religion in September 11 or in suicide bombing, the role of religion in ethnic conflict, and in promoting democracy or development. The question of social theory behind these policy-related questions is this – can we say that there are *cultural or religious* explanations of social phenomena, or are their only *explanations* of culture and religion (provided by social theory)?

The concept of the global resurgence of religion challenges a variety of mainstream perspectives – neo-realism, neo-liberalism, Marxism, dependency theory, and modernization theory. What they have in common is a theory – really, a belief, for that is what it is, going back to the Enlightenment, that the impact of religion in society is simply “epiphenomenal.”⁵⁴ Religion is a mental or secondary phenomenon that shields or covers

in Israeli politics, evangelical Protestantism in Latin America, and “conservative Islamic movements” in the Middle East and North Africa, *Sacred and Secular*, 225, 241.

⁵³ On Hizb ut-Tahrir see, Ed Husain, *The Islamist: Why I joined radical Islam in Britain, what I saw inside and why I left* (London: Penguin, 2007).

⁵⁴ The role of religion in the rise of democracy – like the role of women, gays, and ethnic minorities, has been hidden from history because of the political mythology of liberalism. Secularism and anti-clericalism, going back to the French Revolution, and the Enlightenment, are often thought to be the basis for democratic politics - constitutional government, representative institutions, and individual rights. However, modern secularism should not be read back into the Enlightenment. The Christian churches also contributed to the ideas and institutions that challenged religious and political authority during the Enlightenment. James E. Bradley and Dale K. Van Kley (eds.), *Religion and Politics in Enlightenment Europe* (Notre

the primary phenomenon, the physical drives or motivations for social action rooted in economics and materialism. In other words, physical or materialistic conceptions of identity or well-being are *really* the basis of social action. Social theory simply assumes religion is no longer an important part of what animates life in modern societies, and can be explained away by economic or material factors.⁵⁵

However, do we still have the confidence to say this in these critical or post-modern times? Is social theory *still* a hegemonic discourse capable of explaining other discourses – really, explaining away, other discourses, other ways of explaining or understanding the impact of religion on domestic politics or international affairs?⁵⁶ We now recognize that facts cannot be separated from values, even in the natural or physical worlds, as in the social world. Very little can be deduced directly from brute facts or survey data. Stephen Jay Gould tells us that even the natural sciences are not value-free, and “*some descriptions of phenomena are really social decisions with radical alternatives*” (he was talking about the way *culture* – the Victorian doctrine of progress, crept into the theory of evolution).⁵⁷ David Martin, in his path-breaking study of Protestantism in Latin America, “reminds us how saturated with theory are the concepts deployed in any study of this kind, even those expressly dedicated to the ‘facts.’”⁵⁸ Thus, the meaning of facts or data depends on the concepts, paradigms, assumptions, and the basic contestation between modern or post-modern conceptions of the world used to interpret them.

Social theory – the theory of modernization, and the theory of secularization, forms a coherent way of interpreting the modern world. The theory of secularization is, as Norris and Inglehart claim, the “master model of sociological inquiry.”⁵⁹ It cannot be abandoned without calling into question how modernity is interpreted – how *our* lives are interpreted.

Dame, University of Notre Dame, 2001); Michael Burleigh, *Earthly Powers: Religion and Politics in Europe from the Enlightenment to the Great War* (London: HarperCollins, 2005).

⁵⁵ David Herbert, “Rethinking Religion and Modernity,” 29-60, in Herbert, *Religion and Civil Society: Rethinking Public Religion in the Contemporary World* (London: Ashgate, 2003), and the articles by Elizabeth Shakman Hurd.

⁵⁶ Robert Wuthnow, *Cultural analysis: the work of Peter L. Berger, Mary Douglas, Michel Foucault, and Jurgen Habermas* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984); David Herbert, 1999; Herbst, 8

⁵⁷ “Nature is objective, and nature is knowable, but we can only view her through a glass darkly – and many clouds upon our vision are of our own making: social and cultural biases, psychological preferences, and mental limitations (in universal modes of thought, not just individual stupidity). The human contribution to this equation of difficulty becomes even greater as the subject under investigation comes closer to the heart of our practical and philosophical concerns,” Gould, *Life’s Grandeur*, 8.

⁵⁸ Martin, *Tongues of Fire*, 224.

⁵⁹ Norris and Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular*, 3.

This is why Robert Bellah argues secularization could be called a “myth” rather than a theory. Its social function is mythic, for it provides an emotionally coherent picture of a modern world in which religion is not a “real force” in social or political life but is only a residual or epiphenomenal force that can be explained away - as responses to various types of need, deprivation, or insecurity.⁶⁰ Thus, at stake in understanding the global resurgence of religion are not only the role of religion in politics or development, or even the future of international relations. What is also at stake is the self-understanding of the social sciences at the beginning of the twenty-first century.⁶¹

RELIGION AND SECURITY IN A GLOBAL AGE: INTERPRETING THE GLOBAL RESURGENCE OF RELIGION

So far we have seen that the concept of the global resurgence of religion is about how the larger global cultural shift in domestic society due to globalization is influencing international society. Underlying this cultural shift to the global South has been a massive demographic shift, which is why religion is now mixing with politics. The global resurgence of religion also challenges some of the key aspects of political and social theory that brings out the basic contestation between modern and post-modern conceptions of world politics. It can be argued, for all these reasons, that more holistic accounts of security and religion are required than those provided by the thesis on existential insecurity.

What is security, and what is it for, anyway?

“The most erroneous stories,” Stephen Jay Gould reminds us, “are those we think we know best – and therefore never scrutinize or question.”⁶² Gould was talking about the way that natural selection - using the famous example of the horse, found so frequently in museums and textbooks, is often *misleadingly* interpreted as an example of progress in evolution, rather than simply adaptation to the local environment, without any notion of an absolute scale of

⁶⁰ Robert N. Bellah, “Between Religion and Social Science,” in Robert N. Bellah (ed.), *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditionalist World* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1970, 2nd. edition, 1991), 237-259.

⁶¹ Herbert, “Rethinking Religion and Modernity: Conventional and Discursive Religion,” 3-28; Casanova, 17-18; Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, “Theorizing Religious Resurgence” (MSS, International Studies Association, Chicago, 2007; *International Politics*, forthcoming, 2007).

⁶² Gould, *Life's Grandeur*, 57.

superiority. Here, the example is the story of religion and the rise of modern science, which Norris and Inglehart use to establish the concepts and assumptions for their thesis on existential insecurity. The thesis is based on a wonderful, almost mythological, story of the rise of science and the modern world. Myths provide narratives to explain great social and cultural transitions. They give *meaning* to how we live now, and a *justification* for how things came to be as they are now.⁶³ What this mythic story of the rise of science does is provide the cognitive account of secularization going back as least as far as Max Weber, in which we pass from a world of fear, ignorance, and superstition, to a confident world of power, rationality, and knowledge – in a word, how we have come to the global spread of modernity.

The social psychological or cognitive mechanisms that lead to existential insecurity seem to be fear and uncertainty, and the main purpose of religion is to help people to cope with these problems. The thesis is based on a very simple account of the anthropology of religion.

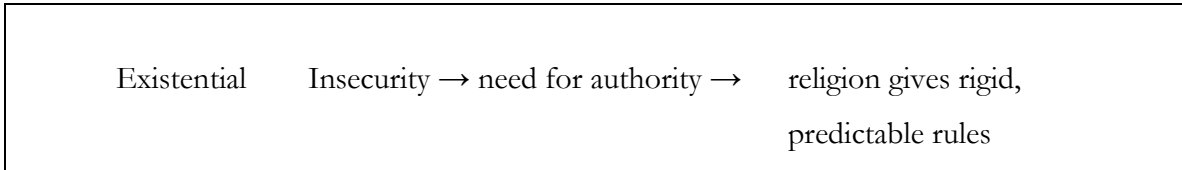
“Virtually all the world’s religions provide reassurance that, even though the individual alone can’t understand or predict what lies ahead, a higher power will ensure that things work out. Both religion and secular ideologies assure people that the universe follows a plan, which guarantees that if you follow the rules, everything will turn out well, in this world or the next.”⁶⁴

Thus, religion is a form of reassurance, a psychological compensation for people in societies or countries with low levels of human development or poorly developed welfare states (such as the United States). Once poor people have an adequate level of existential security they no longer need to be under the grip of religion since they no longer need religion for consolation or compensation. Figure 1 diagrams the hypothesis regarding religion and existential insecurity.

⁶³ Victor W. Turner, “Myth and Symbol,” *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, 10 (New York: Collier and Macmillan, 1968), 576-582.

⁶⁴ Norris and Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular*, 19.

Figure 1
The Pre-Modern World:
Traditional Religion and Existential Insecurity



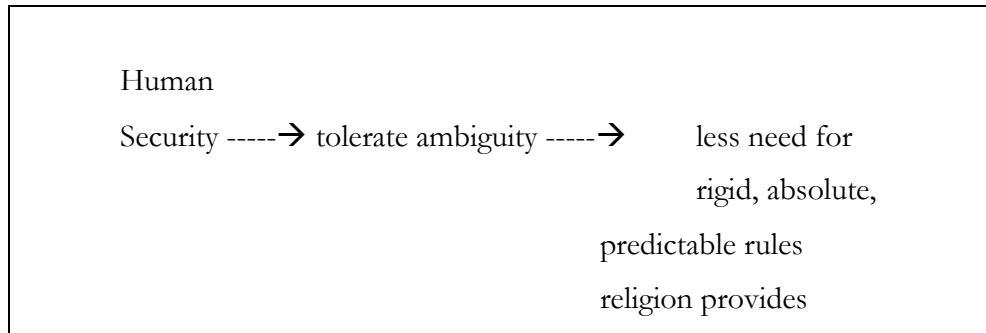
Norris and Inglehart argue that “under the conditions of existential insecurity that have dominated the lives of humanity throughout most of history, the great theological questions concerned a relatively narrow constituency; the vast majority of the population was mostly strongly concerned with the need for reassurance in the face of a world where survival was uncertain, and this was the dominant factor explaining the grip of traditional religion on mass publics.”⁶⁵

However, consistent with the cognitive account of orthodox secularization theory, changes in science, medicine, controlling diseases, and the growing human control over nature, education, the industrial society, etc. has led to changes in people’s daily experience, and greater human control led to a change in the prevailing cosmology. So “as human control of the environment increased, the role ascribed to God dwindled Materialistic ideologies arose that proposed secular interpretations of history and *secular utopias* to be attained by human engineering” (emphasis added).⁶⁶ Figure 2 diagrams the new relationship between human security and secularization in the modern world.

⁶⁵ Norris and Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular*, 19-20.

⁶⁶ Norris and Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular*, 19-20.

Figure 2
The Modern World:
Human Security, Secularization, and the Decline in Religion



This account of religion, science, and existential security still holds a grip on us as modern people, for it is *our* religion – the mythic narrative of modernity we as modern people want to tell about ourselves, and how we want to interpret our lives. The concepts are based on contested historical generalizations, the general relationships it postulates to exist between the concepts may not stand up to closer scrutiny, and, as we will see, they do not appear to hold up given the rich body of case studies of religion in developing countries. Certainly, more research is needed to try and link the general conclusions on existential insecurity to local, grass roots, case studies of religion and development.

First, the narrative of religion and the rise of modern science behind the existential insecurity thesis, although highly popular, is part of the mythology of modernity. We remember the popular, if misleading, story of the Catholic Church and Galileo, since it fits this narrative – the alleged triumph of reason and science over fear, magic, and superstition.⁶⁷ However, at issue here is not the popular, misleading, account of the past on which the existential insecurity thesis is based. What is at issue is how this account of the *past* has influenced the construction of the *concepts* through which *the present is interpreted* – religion and insecurity.

Second, while it is possible to challenge the cultural assumptions behind the concept of existential security, it is also possible to challenge the concept of existential security itself. The concept of existential security is never measured, which is a problem in the social

⁶⁷ Dava Sobel, *Galileo's Daughter: A Historical Memoir of Science, Faith, and Love* (New York: Penguin, 2000); Stephen Barr, *Modern Physics and Ancient Faith* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2003); Richard J. Blackwell, *Behind the Scenes at Galileo's Trial* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2007).

sciences. Existential security is by definition a relational concept; it is the *feeling* people have that their survival is secure enough it can be taken for granted. Norris and Inglehart still accept this basic element of the traditional sociological account of secularization. They believe that religiosity occurs or persists among people with low levels of human development.⁶⁸ What they call “feelings of vulnerability” is what they say is “driving religiosity.”⁶⁹

Well, how do we know this is the case? This crucial proposition, on which rests the entire analysis of existential insecurity, is based on *inferences* and indirect measures. The existential insecurity thesis does not actually establish the social psychological or cognitive mechanisms that would lead to existential insecurity nor cite survey data that people in agrarian and industrial societies felt *more* vulnerable than those in post-industrial societies.⁷⁰ No evidence is provided to demonstrate that the relationships actually exist between the concepts set out in Figures 1 and 2, with their sweeping propositions regarding the concerns of ordinary people now, and what concerned ordinary people in early modern Europe, who were supposedly more gripped by magic, heresy, and superstition than they were by the rituals and doctrines of Christianity. Norris and Inglehart have simply *inferred* this from the popular, if misleading, story of magic, mysticism, and science in early modern Europe.⁷¹

In fact, the opposite was the case. The view that ordinary people were so desperately seeking security that they were uninterested in “traditional religion” - orthodoxy or the actual doctrines of the Catholic Church, or were under the grip of myth, magic, heresy, and mysticism, is part of the mythology of modernity, and is no longer borne out by the most recent studies of the period. It does not provide an adequate account of religion in early modern Europe.⁷²

⁶⁸ Norris and Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular*, 4-5; 14, 61-63.

⁶⁹ Norris and Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular*, 106.

⁷⁰ Norris and Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular*, 48, 69-71, 241, 247.

⁷¹ John von Heyking, “Secularization: Not Dead, But Never What it Seemed,” *International Studies Review*, 7 (2005): 279-284; Christian Smith, Book Reviews, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 45, 4 (2006): 623-624.

⁷² Duffy surveys the recent evidence, including Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (first edition in 1971), and argues that the focus of research on the relatively small number of weird and wild groups in early modern Europe, e.g., “popular religion,” heretics, witches, magic, superstitions, “dissidents,” etc., has distorted our image of the time. He shows the connections between the “elite” or clerical culture and the people at large. See Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Alters: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992); Robert Crocker (ed.), “Religion, Reason, and Nature in Early Modern Europe,” *International Archives of the History of Ideas*, 180 (Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001).

What Norris and Inglehart do to make their inferences from feelings of vulnerability to insecurity “is cite variables that would make upper-class people in the United States and Europe feel vulnerable.”⁷³ A similar view is projected on to poor or ordinary, hard working, people in developed countries or developing countries. These are the people, as Christopher Lasch says, who are unlikely to mistake the promised land of progress – or, what Norris and Inglehart call “secular utopias,” for the true and only heaven. Progress or secular optimism is a doctrine of elite culture.⁷⁴

In other words, the existential insecurity thesis fails to establish that what might make a Christian living in the U.S., Canada, or Europe feel vulnerable is the same as what might make a Muslim in Qatar, a Buddhist in Bhutan, or a Pentecostal in Brazil, Guatemala, or South Korea feel vulnerable, which we will see is a problem when we come to Latin America and Pentecostalism.⁷⁵ They also do not consider what are the causes of vulnerability in Western societies, but simply infer that those causes are unchangeable, have not changed in history, nor have they considered that globalization may have created a new condition of global vulnerability.

Rene Girard, has drawn our attention to mimetic rivalry, the acquisitive desire between individuals and social groups, which it can be argued, is at the core of the way *feelings* of hope, optimism, security or vulnerability are socially constructed, always in relations to others in society around us and what they desire.⁷⁶ Thus, Girard’s concept of mimetic desire helps us to see how the concepts of vulnerability and insecurity are mimetically constructed. If mimetic desire is behind the sociology of existential insecurity, then perceptions and social relationships are important for the construction of the concept of existential insecurity.

⁷³ John von Heyking, “Secularization: Not Dead, But Never What it Seemed,” *International Studies Review*, 7 (2005): 279-284

⁷⁴ Christopher Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991).

⁷⁵ These examples are not idiosyncratic since the Buddhist kingdom of Bhutan is well known for its policy of economic development, which is supposed to be based on a set of more holistic and psychological indicators of “gross national happiness.” Brazil is the largest evangelical community in absolute terms in the developing world (with the possible exception of China), and is the second largest in the world after the United States. Guatemala probably has the highest percentage of Protestants in Latin America, and South Korea is a key evangelical country in numerical strength, where about 20 percent of the population has converted to Protestantism, and it has become an important source of evangelical missionaries for the rest of the world. Andrew C. Revkin, “A New Measure of Well-Being from a Happy Little Kingdom,” *New York Times*, October 4, 2005; Freston, *Evangelicals and Politics*, 11, 61-69, 263-280.

⁷⁶ Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion*, 121-148.

The *World Values Survey* data has questions that are essentially *subjective*, regarding feelings of happiness, feeling healthy, feeling financially secure, and the feeling that people have control over their own lives. Rousseau famously argued that *amour-propre* or vanity, not poverty, is the main cause of feelings of vulnerability. According to Rousseau, Hobbes projected the anxieties of bourgeois England on to the state of nature, and this may very well be what Norris and Inglehart are also doing, except these may be the anxieties of bourgeois, middle class, white-collar, professionals working in Western countries instead.⁷⁷

Why do Scandinavians, with such high levels of human development have such notoriously high suicide rates?⁷⁸ Why in Britain, with high levels of human security, is there a perceived need for research on happiness and well-being? There clearly may be other sources for European “feelings of vulnerability.”

Earlier existential insecurity was described as a situation when individual and social well-being are at *risks*. Ulrich Beck has argued that the Western and non-Western worlds now live in a “world risk society,” in which modernity based on the Enlightenment has brought unforeseen consequences that face all of us in different places and in different cultures.⁷⁹ A world risk society levels out the concept of existential insecurity, especially since security is a mimetic concept based on inference, perception, and social relationships. Quite possibly, for example, anxiety over terrorism or Muslim immigration could spark increased religiosity, a sense of Christian or European identity, and renewed calls for limiting immigration. Global risks can create a feeling of insecurity, vulnerability, and impotence in the face of new global threats - to the environment, the failure of global financial markets, or the proliferation of nuclear weapons, etc. Thus, there are a variety of ways people living in a variety of cultures and countries, at a variety of levels of income can *feel* their well-being is at risk in a global age.

However, Pentecostal and evangelical Christianity, at least according to popular or media stereotypes, would seem to be an example of the kind of rigid, authoritarian, religion postulated by the existential insecurity thesis. Its followers do have a strong view on the authority of the Bible, a strong moral conservatism (although, as we will see, the reality and stereotype is more complicated), and they have a desire for political rulers with strong

⁷⁷ John von Heyking, “Secularization: Not Dead, But Never What it Seemed,” *International Studies Review*, 7 (2005): 279-284

⁷⁸ John von Heyking, “Secularization: Not Dead, But Never What it Seemed,” *International Studies Review*, 7 (2005): 279-284.

⁷⁹ Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1992); Ulrich Beck, *World Risk Society* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1999).

religious beliefs. What recent research, as well as the recently completed survey of Pentecostals in ten countries by the *Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life*, actually found about their beliefs complicates the concepts of insecurity and authoritarianism on which the existential insecurity thesis is based. Most Pentecostals surveyed (50% and over) strongly believe in freedom of speech, civil liberties, elections, and, not surprisingly, freedom of religion (which legitimates their sect-type of Christianity). They also support women as pastors, even if not full “gender equality,” but we may have to recognize that gender and religious conceptions can burst through the survey categories.⁸⁰ Strong majorities believed that “solving the countries problems would be best accomplished when the government allows greater political participation by ordinary people,” although a few countries also supported a leader with a strong hand.⁸¹

The Pew Forum Survey confirms one of the main conclusions of the Norris and Inglehart study. Democratic values are widely supported across cultures and countries, even as they criticize the democratic performance of their own countries. Their case study focuses on the Islamic world, and now we can see this is also the case regarding democratic values among Pentecostal Christians.⁸² The survey, however, shows that support for democratic values is not correlated with values that would lead to increasing secularization. Pentecostals who they would label (inaccurately I would argue) religious fundamentalists support greater democracy and political participation. *The Pew Forum Survey*, for example, found that Pentecostals, for quite understandable reasons, had a very low trust in the military, particularly in Latin America, and a lower trust in the military than Pentecostals in some other countries (U.S., Kenya, Philippines, and the portions of India surveyed), and there was relatively low trust of the media, and local and national governments.⁸³ While the studies are not strictly comparable, it seems the level of trust in government may be lower than in the earlier 1990

⁸⁰ Hallum, raises the question, why are women more religious than men when religion appears overwhelmingly patriarchal in structure? For an answer she points out that many studies of women in Pentecostal churches can be misleading when they focus primarily on official leadership roles and pastors of churches. In fact, women – “sisters,” in the jargon, run worship services, head church committees, and are often a spiritual guiding force for the congregation as well as the household. Most importantly she, and other female researchers argue “women experience and define power differently than men, and when scholars criticize or devalue religion *because* women are not official leaders in religious institutions, the scholars are employing the traditionally male esteem for *structural* power.” Anne Motley Hallum, “Looking for Hope in Central America,”

⁸¹ “The Spirit and Power,” 62-64.

⁸² Norris and Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular*, 144-155.

⁸³ “The Spirit and Power,” 44-47.

World Values Survey. Perhaps, this indicates a decline in support for the values of authoritarianism, and an increase in the democratic values that support democratic consolidation.

However, it might seem that the existential insecurity thesis is borne out by the rise of Pentecostalism for other reasons. Pentecostalism emerged, in the first instance, particularly in Latin America, among very poor people, whose energies were focused on the risks of survival amidst the violent oscillations between military regimes and parliamentary governments, and the failure of modernization to produce democracy or development. David Martin almost twenty years ago acknowledged the role of existential insecurity in the early attractions of Pentecostalism, comparing its network of mutual aid associations to a life raft in the waters of a dangerous and turbulent world.⁸⁴

A more complicated picture has now emerged of Pentecostalism, democracy, and development. The rise of evangelical Protestantism has challenged the cultural hegemony or monopoly position of the Catholic Church, it has encouraged pluralism and competition between religious groups and institutions, and in these ways it has engaged more of the population in religious life, setting the foundations for a more active and stronger civil society.⁸⁵

We have seen that the existential insecurity thesis is based on people's perceptions of human development since it is the fear, risk, and uncertainty of their present and future well-being that is supposed to make people religious. So perceptions are as important as economic indicators. Norris and Inglehart recognize this, and hope that future surveys could look more directly at religiosity in relation to perceptions of risk and security.⁸⁶ What the *Pew Forum Survey* found, quite surprisingly, given the existential insecurity thesis, was that most Pentecostals in the ten countries surveyed think their personal finances are either in good or fair shape. Most are quite hopeful about their future financial prospects, and even have a sense of financial optimism. They believe their future economic prospects are based on their

⁸⁴ David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

⁸⁵ David Martin, *The World Their Parish*; Anthony Gill, "Religion and Democracy in South America," in Ted Gerard Jelen and Clyde Wilcox (eds.), *Religion and Politics in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 195-221. On rebutting the old stereotypes of Pentecostals – as newcomers to Latin America, as apolitical, as pawns of Religious Right in the U.S., as anti-feminist, as the poorest of the poor, and as anti-theological, see Edward L. Cleary and Hanna W. Stewart Gambino (eds.), *Power, Politics, and Pentecostals in Latin America* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1998).

⁸⁶ Norris and Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular*, 239-240.

faith in God, education, and hard work.⁸⁷ Thus, Weber's thesis on the Protestant work ethic and the rise of capitalism hold up pretty well in Latin America. While Pentecostal and evangelical Christianity are not monolithic, a strong correlation now seems to exist between social mobility, the middle class, economic productivity, and increasing political assertiveness.⁸⁸

It is not only very difficult to use the existential insecurity thesis to explain the rapid spread of Pentecostal Christianity around the world. In the Islamic parts of the global South, several studies - Iran, Egypt, Indonesia, Turkey, and Pakistan, for example, indicate religious commitment *increases* with educational achievement, occupational mobility, and modernization.⁸⁹ "Islamic revivalism" (rather than to use the pejorative term, "Islamic fundamentalism") is not necessarily the strongest among the most insecure in society. "It is not the rural poor, but the educated - often to university level - and mobile who tend to join Islamist groups."⁹⁰

The existential insecurity thesis has been used to explain the rise of evangelical politics in the United States since the 1970s. It supposedly helps explain the paradox - why the United States, the most developed country in the world, is also one of the most religious ones, with levels of religiosity similar to those in the global South.⁹¹ Economic inequality is one of the strongest predictors for the level of religious participation. The United States is a developed country with a high degree of religiosity - although this interpretation can be questioned,⁹² can be explained by the fact that the U.S. has the highest level of economic

⁸⁷ "The Spirit and Power," 50-51.

⁸⁸ Amy L. Sherman, *The Soul of Development: Biblical Christianity and Economic Transformation in Guatemala* (New York: Oxford, 1997); Sheldon Annis, *God and Production in a Guatemalan Town* (Austin, TX: University of Texas, 1987); Paul R. Turner, "Religious Conversion and Community Development," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 18 (1979): 242-260; Peter L. Berger, "Max Weber is Alive and Well, and Living in Guatemala: the Protestant Ethic Today" (unpublished MSS); Anne Motley Hallum, "Looking for Hope in Central America,"

⁸⁹ Rodney Stark, "Secularization, R.I.P.," *Sociology of Religion*, 60, 3 (1999): 249-273.

⁹⁰ Herbert, "Rethinking Secularization," in Herbert, *Religion and Civil Society*, 7-48.

⁹¹ The religiosity of the global South should be a resource for U.S. foreign policy. See, Scott M. Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion*, chapters 7, 8.

⁹² One of the key debates on religion in the United States is whether American evangelicalism has so assimilated the values of the nation, given into the forces of individualism, pragmatism, populism, democracy, free enterprise, etc., that it has lost the ability to be prophetic or counter-cultural regarding American civilization. Alan Wolfe, *The Transformation of American Religion: How We Actually Live Our Faith* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003); Richard Kyle, *Evangelicalism: An Americanized Christianity* (New York: Transaction, 2006).

inequality and the lowest levels of social security in the Western world. This is what causes religiosity in the United States.⁹³

However, data drawn from the General Social Survey (GSS) and the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago gathered since the 1970s offers a different analysis of American evangelicalism. Evangelicals are now often solidly upper middle class or middle class, with increasingly high education levels, social mobility, and existential security. Their actual moral views – on abortion, homosexuality, school prayer, and evolution, etc. are far more varied and pragmatic than indicated by the popular media and academic stereotypes.⁹⁴ The existential insecurity thesis cannot adequately account for the rise of evangelical politics in the United States nor its growing fragmentation.⁹⁵

The cultural assumptions made about religion and modernity are crucial for the way the concepts used in the existential insecurity thesis is constructed. What is often dismissed as types of “religious fundamentalism” – Pentecostalism, evangelical Christianity, and Islamic revivalism, etc. as a traditional reaction against modernization, are actually *religious* types of *modern* projects, they are ways of engaging religion creatively in a post-modern world. They are as much a part of the globalization of pluralism in world politics as secular ideologies and social movements. This means we have to look more closely at the way religion is used in the Norris and Inglehart study.

What is religion, and what is it for, anyway?

A crucial part of politics is about what religion is, what its social functions are, and what should be its social and political boundaries in society. The modern secular state has its own ambitions, and is not a neutral actor in how these policy questions are determined. The main purpose of religion according to the existential insecurity thesis is to provide reassurance and psychological compensation. Revivalism or religious resurgence can be “explained” – really, explained away, as a psychological need for certainty, authority, security, and consolation in the face of economic difficulty or social marginalization (Figures 1 and 2).

⁹³ Norris and Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular*, 89-110

⁹⁴ Andrew Greeley and Michael Hout, *The Truth About Conservative Christians: What They Think and What They Believe* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2006).

⁹⁵ Lisa Miller, et. al., “An Evangelical Identity Crisis,” *Newsweek*, November 13, 2007, 24-35.

This simplistic approach to religion is what David Herbert has called the “psycho-social reductionist” model of religion.⁹⁶ Philosophers and scholars of religious studies may criticise the existential insecurity thesis for overemphasizing economics, and “disregarding religion’s relevance to human questions beyond existential security, such as the meaning of life and life after death,” the source of goodness, and what is really valuable in human life.⁹⁷

While it cannot be denied that religion can, and often does, provide existential security – it “comforts the afflicted,” the *meaning* of consolation can be far more than what Marx caricatured religion as, the opiate of the people, a haven in a heartless world. It can include empowerment, and cannot be inferred, almost pejoratively, back to fundamentalism or to simplistic notions of fear, magic, and superstition in early modern Europe. Lehmann, for example, indicates from his fieldwork in Brazil what consolation in Pentecostal churches *does* for women, and many more examples could be given. “For these women,” he says, “the churches provide a place in society, a source of respect for others, and thus possibly the self-confidence to assert themselves in the face of their men and indeed their children.”⁹⁸ Survey evidence of Pentecostals in Latin America, which from the context of North America may be interpreted as support for the Christian Right and their “traditional family values” agenda, really indicates opposition to *machista*, the values of the “male prestige arena” – street, bar, brothel, football stadium, and drug culture.⁹⁹ Something similar can be said, we will see, about Islamic women’s organizations in Bosnia. This is one of the reasons why the existential insecurity thesis used to interpret the survey data often seems to miss lived religion on the ground.

The study’s psycho-social reductionist model of religion can be challenged because the concepts it constructed are part of the political mythology of liberalism. We have already seen how secularization, broadly defined as religious privatization, and the separation of politics and religion, is accepted in the West as the norms of modern political life. Any deviations from these norms – say, by the FIS in Algeria during the 1990s, Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood, the AKP in Turkey, or the Islamist parties in Pakistan, are simply branded as

⁹⁶ Herbert, “Rethinking Secularization,” and “After Nasser: the Islamization of Civil Society and the Public Sphere in Egypt,” in Herbert, *Religion and Civil Society*, 29-60; 265-290.

⁹⁷ Ahmet T. Kuru, Book Review, *Comparative Political Studies*, 38(2005): 1300-1304; Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity* (Concord, Ontario: House of Anansi Press, 1991).

⁹⁸ David Lehmann, *Struggle for the Spirit: Religious Transformation and Popular Culture in Brazil and Latin America* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1996), 225.

⁹⁹ Martin, *Pentecostalism: the World Their Parish*, 75.

radical, extremist, or fundamentalist, and an inherently a threat to peace, social order, and democracy.

The study's psycho-social reductionist model of religion also does not consider the variety of forms, roles, and functions of religion in different societies and cultures. There is the problem, as Steve Bruce and Jose Casanova have noted, and Norris and Inglehart do seem to be aware of it, that there is a difficulty with some of the questions of the *World Values Survey* cross-cultural compatibility beyond the world of Christianity.¹⁰⁰ More importantly, however, this reductionist model of religion does not consider how dynamic religious traditions can be (rather than static or reified, as in Huntington's concept of civilizations), and how the forms, roles, and functions of religion are changing with globalization in the twenty-first century.

We have already argued that religion is not declining but is restructuring in a global age, and this is one of the reasons why many sociologists have rejected the theory of secularization. There are "shifts in the cultural form of religion (from text to image, from propositional truth to communally validated experience) which are likely to register on conventional measures of religious belief as decline, but may rather indicate only change." The public sphere is increasingly complex, with the spread of modernization and globalization, and religious groups and institutions play a variety of changing roles within society.¹⁰¹

The role of religious image, symbol, and discourse is growing, and is not easily captured by the indicators of conventional religiosity.¹⁰² Religious ways of thinking, imagining, and representing reality increasingly untied to "formal" religious leaders can capture the public imagination, and shape the way social or political issues are discussed. This is what has happened with evangelical Protestantism in the U.S. since the 1920s, it has now spread to the Christian parts of the developing world, and it is now happening in the

¹⁰⁰ Questions dealing with attendance at worship services and the performance of rituals do not have a direct comparability with Shinto or Buddhist practices, when the frequency, and the meaning of such practices differ from Christianity. Herbert, "Rethinking Secularization," in Herbert, *Religion and Civil Society*, 15.

¹⁰¹ Herbert, "Rethinking Secularization," in Herbert, *Religion and Civil Society*, 15.

¹⁰² Lehmann, for example, argues, "It is therefore not at the level of explicit political programmes or statements that we should interpret the political impact of Pentecostalism. Rather, we should observe the symbolic and imaginary world which it is projecting, and also its impact on the broader political theatre of these countries." David Lehmann, *Struggle for the Spirit*, 217. The same analysis could be applied to Islamic revivalism.

Islamic world – challenging in new ways our conventional categories of tradition and modernization.

The days are gone in Africa, for example, when mainline Protestant or Catholic Church leaders are recognized as the religious leaders in society. They have been replaced by a variety of upstart, Pentecostal, or evangelical pastors, ministering to the rising elites in business and government in the urban areas.¹⁰³ The various types of Islamic media, and the rise of young, charismatic, attractive, preachers who form new Islamic organizations, also have contributed to a growing decline in the *ulema*, the Islamic clergy or scholars trained in Islamic jurisprudence. Herbert's case studies of Bosnia and Egypt, for example, show how Islamic discourse for the educated middle class is a way of articulating what Habermas would call their life-world, their hopes and dreams for the future; and, for development NGOs, how Islamic women's organizations can empower women abused during the war in Bosnia. He also shows how religious organizations can be a vital part of civil society to promote democracy and development.¹⁰⁴

Another problem with the study's use of the psycho-social reductionist model of religion is that it rather oddly ignores politics or treats politics as an epiphenomenon. It depoliticizes the reasons why *religious* individuals or social groups may become interested in *politics*. One of the reasons for the religious resurgence is that it is a *response* to the power or growth of the state – the state's ability to intervene in society, and impose its own secular agenda, or it attempts to use religion to legitimate its own power and political agenda. The former occurrence can be seen in the rise of the Moral Majority and the Christian Right in the United States, in response to the Supreme Court's decisions on abortion and school prayer. It can also be seen in the way the secularizing policy of Egypt's state education, in an attempt to limit the public influence of religion, had the opposite effect, and increased the influence of religious discourse more firmly in the public sphere (a similar story can be told regarding the Islamic resurgence in Turkey).¹⁰⁵ Nasser promoted "Arab socialism" in Egypt when he first came to power, and as his popularity waned, he turned to "Islamic socialism." Anwar Sadat, Nasser's successor, General Zia-ul-Haq in Pakistan, and Gen. Numeri in the

¹⁰³ Freston, on "Ghana," although this is a more general point, *Evangelicals and Politics in Asia, Africa and Latin America*, 143-145.

¹⁰⁴ Herbert, "Rethinking Religion and Modernity," 16-17; and Herbert, "After Nasser: The Islamization of Civil Society and the Public Sphere in Egypt," 265-290, in Herbert, *Religion and Civil Society*.

¹⁰⁵ Gregory Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work: Education, Politics, and Religious Transformation in Egypt* (1998), examined in detail by Herbert, "Rethinking Religion and Modernity," 18-22.

Sudan are all rulers who tried to use Islam to legitimate their failing or faulty regimes. This only served to legitimate and encourage new and existing Islamic groups, and more diverse forms of public Islam as a form of public discourse.¹⁰⁶ The psycho-social reductionist model of religious resurgence ignores the way the power of the state has influenced the rise of political religion.

Thus, for a variety of reasons there has not been a decline in religion, but a restructuring of religion. Scholars of international relations need “closer scrutiny of the processes of cultural reproduction and adaptation that enables religious traditions to perform these new roles” in a global era.¹⁰⁷ The survey data often captures is a rather stodgy, old-fashioned, view of religion, and, not surprisingly, this is the form of religion that is in decline. Religion itself, the dynamic, lived religious traditions of most of the people in the world, is being transformed by modernization and globalization. Religion is taking new forms and new roles in domestic politics and world politics in the twenty-first century.

CONCLUSION

This paper has evaluated the concept of the global resurgence of religion, and the challenge posed to it by the thesis of existential insecurity. It has argued that the concept of fundamentalism – which, when all is said and done, is defined by the existential insecurity thesis to be any kind of serious religious commitment, is a more limited, and less useful conception of the influence of religion on international affairs.

The global resurgence of religion is a more wide-ranging concept that is trying to capture a long-term cultural shift in the role, form, and functions of religion caused by modernization and globalization, and the impact of this cultural shift on the transformation of international relations. The contention that such a cultural shift is occurring, and that it needs to be taken seriously by scholars of international relations, requires taking seriously how the global resurgence of religion challenges the way social theory has so often interpreted religion. These challenges – to the theories of secularization and modernization,

¹⁰⁶ John L. Esposito, and Francois Burgat (eds), *Modernizing Islam: Religion in the Public Sphere in the Middle East and Europe* (Rutgers, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003); Armando Salvatore and Dale F. Eickelman (eds.), *Public Islam and the Common Good* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

¹⁰⁷ Herbert, “After Nasser: The Islamization of Civil Society and the Public Sphere in Egypt,” in Herbert, *Religion and Civil Society*, 268.

to the political mythology of liberalism, and to the hegemony of social theory in the social sciences, fit uncomfortably within mainstream discourses on international relations and international development. Many scholars, policy-elites, and Western donor governments are still committed to the modernizing mythology of the twentieth century. They still expect, like the predictions in the thesis on existential insecurity, that with more nation-building and economic development the impact of culture, religion, and identity politics will decline in international relations.

We have seen how such views are based on a particular understanding of security and religion. The concept of security in the thesis on existential insecurity is based on the cognitive account of secularization going back at least as far as Max Weber. This account is based on historical generalizations regarding the fear, anxiety, and uncertainty that gripped people in early modern Europe before the rise of modern science, which at the very least are contested. The concept itself is based on inferences and indirect measures about the alleged concerns of ordinary people in history, and the concerns of people who live bourgeois lives today. The mimetic, relational, aspects of existential insecurity, and the impact of globalization, with all of us now living in a global risk society, further limits the usefulness of the concept as part of an explanation of religiosity that targets poor people with low levels of human development.

In contrast to the thesis of existential insecurity, religion is not the same as fundamentalism, nor is it the same as a set of rules for poor or marginalized people, which provide them with certainty and authority in an unstable and dangerous world around them. Religion can and does console people in poor communities, but it can also empower them, it can help them transform their lives and their communities, which is also transforming international relations. It has argued that two of the clearest examples of this are the global Islamic revival and the rapid spread of evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity, which challenge the Western concepts and categories underlying the limited concept of security in the thesis on existential insecurity. More holistic conceptions of security and religion shows how Islam and Christianity - an increasingly non-Western religion, can be adapted *to* modernity in the non-Western cultures of the global South. The case study research so far reinforces the view of this article – religion is not in decline, it is increasingly being transformed in a global era, for there are many non-Western ways of being religious and being modern in the twenty-first century.