Cosmopolitanism, the clash of civilizations and multiple modernities

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Abstract
The article examines the three alternative conceptions of the emerging global order with special reference to the place and role of the world religions in that order. (1) Cosmopolitanism builds upon developmental theories of modernization that envision this transformation as a global expansion of western secular modernity, conceived as a universal process of human development. Secularization remains a key analytical as well as normative component. Religions that resist privatization are viewed as a dangerous ‘fundamentalism’ that threatens the differentiated structures of secular modernity. (2) Huntington’s conception of the ‘clash of civilizations’ maintains the analytical components of western modernity but stripped of any universalist normative claim. Modernity is a particular achievement of western civilization that is grounded in the Judeo-Christian tradition. The world religions are the continuously vital core of what are essentially incompatible civilizations doomed to clash with one another for global hegemony. (3) The model of ‘multiple modernities’ is presented as an alternative analytical framework that combines some of the universalist claims of cosmopolitanism, devoid of its secularist assumptions, with the recognition of the continuous relevance of the world religions for the emerging global order.

Keywords
clash of civilizations, cosmopolitanism, multiple modernities, religion, secularization

Cosmopolitanism, the clash of civilizations and multiple modernities are three alternative analytical conceptualizations as well as three markedly different pragmatic visions of the present and of a future global order. I would like to examine critically those three alternative visions with special focus on the role and place they assign to religion and particularly
to the world religions. The main idea I would like to propose is that SN Eisenstadt’s (2002) theory of multiple modernities offers a more fruitful alternative conceptualization of processes of globalization than either theories of a secular cosmopolitan ‘world society’ or of ‘the clash of civilizations’. Within such a perspective the world religions can be viewed as global imagined communities reconstituted by processes of globalization, which in turn become carriers of those processes and of the multiple modernities that ensue within their civilizational spaces. However, under contemporary global conditions the world religions and their related civilizations become deterritorialized and are to be conceived no more as geopolitical territorial spaces but rather as interrelated communicative spaces within a single world.

For the purpose of this presentation I use ‘world religions’ in the loose, unsystematic sense in which it was introduced by Max Weber (1946 [1922–3]), without entering into thorny definitional, doxological, or taxonomic issues. It can be taken for granted that ‘religion’ is a modern category, constituted by the epistemic hegemony of ‘the secular’ and that the so-called ‘world religions’ are inventions of western secular Christian modernity (Asad, 1993, 2003; Masuzawa, 2005; Scott and Hirschkind, 2006). One may also assume that the clusters and families of heterogeneous traditions, practices and civilizational ensembles that are called world religions have neither essence nor fixed internal and external boundaries, despite all attempts by high priests, rulers, theologians, scientific experts and media to define canons and boundaries. What could count as world religion? Certainly, the many branches of the religious and moral traditions included by Max Weber in his comparative studies, namely, Judaism (1952), Christianity (1930, 1993), Islam (1993), Hinduism (1967), Buddhism (1967), Confucianism (1968) and Taoism (1968). But also included could be the many ‘hybrids’ which have emerged from the colonial and intercivilizational encounters between East and West, North and South, and are today becoming increasingly globalized, as well as the so-called ‘native’ or ‘indigenous’ religions which are also being transformed and transplanted under renewed diasporic and global conditions. The Bahai, Hare Krishna, Unification Church and Falun Gong movements are examples of contemporary global hybrids, while Afro-American religions such as Vodou, Santeria and Candomble are old colonial hybrids which are undergoing today a renewed process of radical diasporic transformation.

Cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitanism is used here in the broad sense of any worldview that envisions the future global order as a single, relatively homogeneous and unified global economic, political and cultural system or as a single ‘universal civilization’. It includes the explicit collective project of ‘cosmopolitan democracy’ associated with the names of David Held, Daniele Archibugi, Mary Kaldor and Richard Falk among others (Archibugi, 2003; Archibugi and Held, 1995; Archibugi et al., 1998; Beck, 2000, 2006; Falk, 1998; Kaldor, 1999), but also ‘the end of history’ thesis proposed by Francis Fukuyama (1992) with its vision of the ‘universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government’. To a certain extent, most economic and technological deterministic theories of globalization also share the same cosmopolitan assumptions insofar as they assume that economic and technological globalization will determine the shape of global society and of global culture. Despite their greater complexity and the room they give to
diversity, heterogeneity, inequality and difference within world society, Luhmannian theories of *Weltgesellschaft* also share many of the same secular cosmopolitan assumptions insofar as they conceptualize the process of formation of such a world society as a process of functional differentiation (Stichweh, 1991).

Cosmopolitanism builds upon developmental theories of modernization that envision social change as a global expansion of western modernity, which is understood not as the hegemonic expansion of a particular social formation, but as a universal process of human development. In most cosmopolitan accounts, religion either does not exist, or it is simply ‘invisible’ in Thomas Luckmann’s (1967) sense of the term of being an individualized and privatized form of salvation or quest for meaning, that is irrelevant to the functioning of the primary institutions of modern society. In its collective dimension, religion is simply reduced to just another form of cultural group identity. If and when religion emerges in the public sphere and has to be taken seriously, it is usually branded either as anti-modern fundamentalism resisting processes of secularization, or as a form of traditionalist collective identity reaction to the threat of globalization (Castells, 1997). In other words, religion in the eyes of cosmopolitan elites is either irrelevant or reactive. Indeed, when it comes to religion all forms of cosmopolitanism share at least implicitly the basic tenets of the theory of secularization which the social sciences and modern liberal political ideologies have inherited from the Enlightenment critique of religion. Cosmopolitanism remains a faithful child of the European Enlightenment.

The ideological critique of religion developed by the Enlightenment and carried out by a series of social movements throughout Europe from the 18th to the 20th century has informed European theories of secularization in such a way that those theories have come to function not only as descriptive theories of particular European developments, but more significantly as critical-genealogical theories of ‘religion’ in general and as normative-teleological theories of religious development which posit religious decline as the telos of history. The theory of secularization is so intrinsically interwoven with all the theories of the modern world and with the self-understanding of western modernity that one cannot simply discard the theory of secularization without putting into question the entire web, including much of the understanding of the social sciences. Self-definitions of modernity are tautological insofar as secular differentiation is precisely what defines a society as modern. Consequently, the analytical definition of secular differentiation cannot easily be dissociated from ‘the unfinished project of modernity’ (Habermas, 1981), from the normative task of turning the temporal age of modernity into a homogeneous global space until all contemporary societies in modernity but not of modernity become liberal modern secular societies.

It is time to abandon the Euro-centric view that modern Western European developments, including the secularization of European Christianity, are general universal processes. The more one adopts a global perspective, the more it becomes obvious that the drastic secularization of Western European societies is a rather exceptional phenomenon, with few parallels elsewhere other than in European settler societies such as New Zealand, Quebec or Uruguay. Such an exceptional phenomenon demands therefore a more particular historical explanation. The collapse of the plausibility structures of European Christianity is so extraordinary that we need a better explanation than simply referring to general processes of modernization. Holding onto the traditional theory of secularization, by
contrast, reassures modern secular Europeans and global cosmopolitans, including sociologists of religion, that this collapse was natural, teleological and quasi-providential. It turns the theory into a self-fulfilling prophecy (Casanova, 2003, 2006).

The progressive, though highly uneven, secularization of Europe is an undeniable social fact. An increasing majority of the European population have ceased participating in traditional religious practices, at least on a regular basis, even though they may still maintain relatively high levels of private, individual religious beliefs. But the standard explanations of the phenomenon in terms of general processes of modernization are not persuasive since similar processes of modernization elsewhere (in the US, or in the cultural areas of other world religions) are not accompanied by the same secularizing results. We need to entertain seriously the proposition that secularization became a self-fulfilling prophecy in Europe, once large sectors of the population of Western European societies, including the Christian churches, accepted the basic premises of the theory of secularization: that secularization is a teleological process of modern social change; that the more modern a society the more secular it becomes; that ‘secularity’ is a *sign of the times*. If such a proposition is correct, then the secularization of Western European societies can be explained better in terms of the triumph of the knowledge regime of secularism, than in terms of structural processes of socioeconomic development such as urbanization, education, rationalization, etc.

Indeed, in recent revisionist theories it is Europe and European settler colonies which appear as the exception to the global rule of religious vitality. But the new concept of ‘European exceptionalism’, while helpful in undermining the old universal claims of European secularization, becomes problematic and misleading if it is meant to imply that there is some general global pattern or rule of religious development or resurgence, be it the American paradigm of competitive religious economies (Finke and Stark, 2005; Iannaccone, 1991; Stark et al., 1996) or ‘the desecularization of the world’ (Berger, 1999), to which Europe would be the exception (Davie, 2002).

We need to go beyond exceptionalisms as much as against invidious misleading contrasts between the secular liberal West and the religious fundamentalist ‘Rest’ (Juergensmeyer, 1993). I would not propose, however, that we abandon altogether the concept or the theory of secularization as meaningless. I believe that the theory of secularization is still useful not only as a way of reconstructing analytically the transformations of modern European societies, but also as an analytical framework for a comparative research agenda which aims to examine the historical transformation of all world religions and civilizations under conditions of modern structural differentiation, as long as the outcome of this transformation is not predetermined by the theory, and as long as we do not label as religious fundamentalism any counter-secularization, or any religious transformation which does not follow the prescribed model.

A brief review of contemporary theories of religious fundamentalism can help illustrate the way in which secularist assumptions built into our theories of modernity unwittingly distort our social scientific analysis and our understanding of the ways in which religion and religious movements of all kinds are implicated in political conflicts throughout the world. Indeed, our theories of religious fundamentalism only make sense as counterparts of our theories of secularization. As the reader will know, hundreds of books have been written lately on the topic of religious fundamentalism, the most important of them being the dozens of studies of contemporary religious movements in all world religions,
gathered under the five-volume *Fundamentalism Project* (Marty and Appleby, 1991–5). From a descriptive and even interpretative point of view, many of the individual studies are extremely valuable. It is the general analytical-theoretical framework within which they have been placed, as if all those diverse religious movements would be instances of a single phenomenon we may designate as global religious fundamentalism, that is in my view highly problematic. We need to put into question the basic tendency to interpret all those religious movements as a fundamentalist reaction to the world-historical process of secularization, as instances of a global conflict between religion and secular modernity.

As an analytical category of social science as well as of political journalism, the concept of religious fundamentalism re-emerged together with the public re-emergence of American Protestant Fundamentalism, with the foundation of Moral Majority and other organizations of the Christian Right in the midst of the 1979 electoral campaign that brought Ronald Reagan to the White House. In this particular context the category of fundamentalism may have been fully justified since it was a designation which many Christian groups and congregations used to name themselves in contradistinction to other mainline and evangelical Protestant denominations. Immediately, however, the category of religious fundamentalism was applied to the simultaneously unfolding Islamic revolution in Iran. Soon thereafter the category was extended to characterize pejoratively all kinds of Islamic and ‘Islamist’ religious movements emerging throughout the Muslim world, until Islam itself was generally viewed as an essentially ‘fundamentalist’ religion, incompatible with modern differentiated structures, particularly with the differentiation of religion and politics.

Subsequently, the category of religious fundamentalism was expanded to incorporate revival movements in all world religions and religious traditions: the growth of Hindu nationalism and the rise to power of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at the expense of the secularist Congress; ethno-religious conflicts between Sikhs and Hindus in the Punjab and between Muslims and Hindus in Kashmir; conflicts between separatist Tamil Hindus and Sinhalese Buddhist movements in Sri Lanka; the emergence of new forms of Jewish religious Zionism challenging the foundational secular Zionist project; the subsequent related transformation of the Palestinian nationalist movement with the rise of Hamas and other Islamic movements within the occupied territories; even the growth of Protestantism in Latin America and the expansion of Pentecostalism throughout Latin America, Africa and Asia. All these religious phenomena were now interpreted as so many instances of a single worldwide phenomenon, the global growth of religious fundamentalism as a multiform reaction against secular modernity.

In their book *Strong Religion*, which grew out of the Fundamentalism Project and is probably the best and most systematic attempt to develop a comparative theory that can account for ‘the rise of fundamentalisms around the world’, Gabriel Almond, Scott Appleby and Emmanuel Sivan (2003) repeatedly refer to ‘fundamentalism’ as ‘one of the most significant political phenomena of our time’, and indicate that ‘the phenomenon of “global fundamentalism” took an unprecedented urgency in the minds of millions of people around the world’ after September 11 (Almond et al., 2003: 1). They interpret these movements as ‘militant and highly focused antagonists of secularization . . . [which] call a halt to the centuries-long retreat of the religious establishments before the secular power’ (Almond et al., 2003: 1–2). But such an interpretation, indeed such an analytical
perspective, only makes sense if one assumes first the existence of a world-historical process of secularization. Take away the premise of a universal process of secularization and the analytical category of global religious fundamentalism collapses as meaningless.

What does not disappear is the reality of all these diverse religious phenomena out there throughout the world or the urgency to develop better analytical categories and a more useful conceptual framework to compare, classify and differentiate all these complex religious movements in order to gain a better interpretative understanding. The problem with the concept of religious fundamentalism as an analytical social scientific category is that, as so many other sociological categories, it is not a neutral descriptive category but rather an evaluative, normative and highly emotive category that emerges from within the ideological epistemic conflicts between secularism and religious world-views. As engaged participants in these ideological conflicts we are of course entitled to use the category of fundamentalism as a way of expressing our partisanship, but as analytical observers and sociological interpreters of these conflicts we are obliged to adopt a more critical and reflexive awareness of the ideological baggage of the category.

As I already indicated, I am not implying that secularization is not a real historical and deeply contested process. I do not share the view of so many of my American colleagues in the sociology of religion who believe that secularization is a myth, a European one. I take for granted that secularization is indeed a historical process, or rather, that is, an appropriate and useful analytical category, as a way of conceptualizing the historical process of transformation of Western European Christianity. It is a category that makes sense within the context of the particular internal and external dynamics of the transformation of Western European Christianity from the Middle Ages to the present. But the category becomes problematic once it is generalized as a universal process of societal development and once it is transferred to other world religions and other civilizational areas with very different dynamics of structuration of the relations and tensions between religion and world, or between cosmological transcendence and worldly immanence.

As the dictionary of any Western European language will show, to secularize means ‘to make worldly’, to convert or transfer persons, things, meanings, etc., from religious or ecclesiastical to secular or civil use. But such a concept of ‘secularization’ could hardly be applicable, for instance, to such ‘religions’ as Confucianism or Taoism, insofar as they are not characterized by high tension with ‘the world’ and have no ecclesiastical organization. In a sense those religions, which have always been ‘worldly’ and ‘lay’, do not need to undergo a process of secularization. To secularize, i.e. ‘to make worldly’ or ‘to transfer from ecclesiastical to civil use’, are processes which do not make much sense in such a civilizational context.

It just happened, of course, that this particular Western European and specifically Christian dynamic became globalized with the expansion of European colonialism, with the global expansion of capitalism, with the global expansion of the European system of states, with the global expansion of modern science, modern culture and modern ideologies of secularism. Therefore, to ask how Confucianism, Taoism or any other world religion responds to the global expansion of ‘Western secular modernity’, how religious traditions are reinterpreted as a response to this global challenge, to examine which kinds of aggiornamenti emerge within all world religions – using here the particular name given to the recent reinterpretation of the Catholic tradition – are all valid and important
questions. But to view all these diverse processes of religious transformation in a simple
dichotomous way as either accommodation to secular modernity or as fundamentalist
reaction against secularization is not, I would argue, a very fruitful or insightful way of
interpreting these processes. It only situates us as secularist Euro-centric observers.

It is time to revise our monological and teleological conceptions of a global cosmo-
politan secular modernity against which we can characterize the religious ‘other’ as ‘fun-
damentalist’. It is time to make room for more complex, nuanced and reflexive categories
which will help us to understand better the already emerging global system of multiple
modernities. As long as we maintain this concept of a single cosmopolitan modernity as
a general process of secular differentiation, indeed as a normative global project, we are
compelled to characterize all forms of religion we cannot accept as our own as threaten-
ing ‘fundamentalism’ and we become ourselves unwitting partisans in a supposedly
worldwide secular–religious conflict and may even help turn the so-called ‘clash of civi-
lizations’ into a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The clash of civilizations

It is to the merit of Samuel Huntington to have been one of the first prominent voices to
point out the increasing relevance of cultural systems, civilizations and the world religions
for world politics after the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the bipolar geopolitics
of the Cold War. The relevance of his study, The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking
of World Order (1996), is threefold:

1. He breaks with the secularism long hegemonic in the field of Realpolitik and inter-
national relations by bringing religion to the center of civilizational analysis and by
insisting that the contemporary global condition facilitates the return of the old
civilizations and world religions as significant cultural systems and as imagined
communities, overlapping and at times in competition with the imagined commu-
nity of the nation. Nations will continue to be, for the foreseeable future, relevant
carriers of collective identities within this global space, but local and transnational
identities, particularly religious ones, are likely to become ever more prominent.
While new transnational imagined communities will emerge, the most relevant
ones are likely to be once again the old civilizations and world religions.

2. He subverts through a powerful ideological critique the universalist claims of
theories of modernization as westernization, of western modernity and of cosmo-
politan globalization. In this respect his position dovetails with traditional cri-
tiques of western imperial hegemony and with postmodern critiques of western
universalism.

3. As a political analyst grounded in the hard-nosed tradition of Realpolitik he offers
a mordant critique of the overtly optimistic visions of a harmonious and peaceful
global order based on cosmopolitan values and multilateral internationalism that
proliferated after the end of the Cold War.

Huntington has raised provocatively the argument that democracy and the cultural
norms and values upon which it is based such as liberty, equality and human rights may be
a civilizational achievement of the Christian West and therefore not easily transferable to other civilizations or world religions, other than through western hegemonic imposition or through outright conversion to western norms and culture. If the thesis is correct, it would follow that the third wave of democratization, which he himself analyzed systematically in a previous work, may have reached its civilizational limits and that few other countries are likely to attain successful transitions to stable democracies (Huntington, 1991).

Ironically, this is a view shared by western hegemonists like Huntington, by postmodern critics of hegemonic western universalism and by some religious and political elites in non-western countries who want to protect themselves and their societies from the contagion of undesirable elements of western modernity.

But Huntington’s (1996) controversial vision of the impending clash between the Christian democratic West and other civilizations, particularly ‘Islamic-Confucian states’, has three fundamental flaws:

1. Huntington offers an essentialist and ahistorical view of civilizations that assumes that the world religions upon which they are based have some unchangeable core essence.
2. He conceives of civilizations as territorially bounded geopolitical units akin to superpowers and nation-states.
3. From a policy perspective, the combination of normative particularism and the presumption of the inevitability of hegemonic power conflicts in the international arena leads him to an unabashed assertion of western global hegemony that can easily turn the prognosis of the clash of civilizations into a dangerous self-fulfilling prophecy.

Huntington’s thesis has been most widely and rightly criticized for his essentialism. Huntington’s (1991) own analysis of ‘the third wave’ of democratization can be used to question his essentialist assumptions. Roughly two-thirds of the 30 or so countries which underwent successful transitions to democracy since the mid-1970s were Catholic. Moreover, Catholic groups played a prominent role in democratic transitions even in countries where they constituted small minorities, such as South Korea or South Africa. In this respect, it was a Catholic wave not just because the countries where it occurred happened to be Catholic, but because the transformation of Catholicism associated with the aggiornamento of the Second Vatican Council was itself an important independent factor in producing the wave (Casanova, 2001).

Had Huntington developed his argument only a few decades earlier, before the Catholic aggiornamento, the formulation could possibly have taken the form of the clash of the Protestant secular West against ‘the Rest’, and Catholic culture could have been easily construed as essentially inimical to democracy. This, after all, was an old thesis, not totally without foundation in reality, which De Tocqueville (1972 [1835–40]) had already tried to refute in the 1830s. The thesis has a long history, even before the Enlightenment. The key anti-Catholic prejudices that were driving the Protestant argument were the ancient anti-Catholic prejudices of the Old Testament, the anti-Catholic prejudices of the Enlightenment, and the anti-Catholic prejudices of the French Revolution.
the religious teachings of the Catholic church puts into question the notion of the unchanging core essence of a world religion as dogmatically structured as Catholicism. The premise of an unchanging core essence should be even less valid for other world religions with a less dogmatically structured doctrinal core or with a more pluralistic and contested system of authoritative interpretation of the religious tradition.

The successful democratic transitions in South Korea and Taiwan, in addition to the persistence of democracy in Japan, put into question the validity of Huntington’s thesis for the Confucian–Buddhist area, despite the attempts of political leaders in Singapore to defend a supposedly Asian authoritarian culture against western cultural imperialism. The same could be said about the persistence of a much tested democracy in India, despite the hegemonic project of a resurgent Hindu nationalism that challenges the institutions of a secular Indian state which are meant to protect religious pluralism. But it is in relation to Islam that Huntington’s thesis has found the greatest resonance and has provoked the most heated debates.

Tragically, the terrorist attacks of September 11, perpetrated as they were by Muslim militants, and the military response of the western alliance against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, against Al Qaeda and other networks of Muslim militants and against Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq have only exacerbated these debates. Not surprisingly, many have viewed the terrorist attacks and the western military responses as a dramatic confirmation of the civilizational clash between Islam and the West. Such an interpretation of the conflict appears to have found considerable resonance throughout the West as well as throughout the Muslim world. Such a charged atmosphere is hardly conducive to a reasonable debate on the conditions of possibility for democracy and civil society in Muslim countries. But the question is as relevant and perhaps more urgent than ever.

It is an undeniable fact that the majority of Muslim countries today have authoritarian political regimes and repressive states. Many of those regimes rely on the military and financial support of the US and other western powers. Many of them also claim to be ‘Muslim’ states or seek the religious mantle of Islam as a source of political legitimation for the most diverse institutions and political practices. In fact, practically every political movement or project, in power or in opposition, throughout the Muslim world claims to be ‘Islamic’ if not ‘Islamist’. It is this very fact of the apparently inevitable fusion of religion and politics in Muslim countries which has led so many external observers and ‘experts’ to attribute a ‘fundamentalist’ essence to Islam that allegedly makes it incompatible with the differentiated structures of modernity and with the privatization of religion supposedly required by liberal democracy (Lewis, 1993; Tibi, 1990).

More than the ongoing intellectual debates among orientalists and ‘experts’ concerning the nature of Islam, it is the very open and contentious contemporary debates among Muslims concerning their own tradition that raises the question as to what constitutes if not the essential core of Islam as a civilization, certainly its authoritative interpretation and its authentic representation today. But essentialist interpretations of Islam tend to preclude the possibility that contemporary Muslims may find their own models of aggiornamenti (they are likely to be plural), which like the Catholic one would offer viable responses attuned both to their religious tradition and to modern requirements.

The comparison with Catholicism may be instructive because, like Islam today, it was viewed for a long time as the paradigmatic anti-modern fundamentalist religion.
Catholicism served as the central focus of the Enlightenment critique of religion. It offered for centuries the most spirited, principled and seemingly futile resistance to modern processes of secularization and modernization. Even after its official accommodation with secular modernity and after relinquishing its identity as a monopolistic state church, the Catholic church refuses to become just a private religion, just an individual private belief. It wants to be both modern and public. Indeed, since Vatican II it has kept a highly public profile throughout the world.

The relevant question, of course, is whether one should attribute the widespread impulse found in the contemporary politics of Muslim countries to establish ‘Islamic’ states to some Islamic essence which Muslims cannot relinquish without also abandoning their religious tradition and their identity; or alternatively whether ‘it is the product of modern politics and the modernizing state’ (Asad, 1997: 190). I am not in a position to evaluate the competing claims concerning the history of Islam, but since one finds similar ‘fundamentalist’ impulses to symbiotic fusions of religions and politics throughout the history of nation-state formation in the Christian West and today one finds similar ‘fundamentalist’ impulses within Judaism in Israel, within Hinduism in India and within Buddhism in Sri Lanka, I would be inclined to attribute the common ‘fundamentalist’ impulse to the common context of nation-state formation, rather than to some common symbiotic fusion of religion and politics at the genesis of all these religions which has left an indelible mark in their make-up.

The problem is not just that Huntington’s analysis rests on an essentialist conception of Islam, but that the construction of ‘the West’ on which it is based is no less essentialist. The juxtaposition of Catholicism and Islam shows that the problem lies not only in simplistic depictions of a uniform ‘fundamentalist’ Islam, that fail to acknowledge the extraordinary diversity one finds among Muslim societies in the past and in the present. Equally problematic and misleading is the essentialist construction of a modern secular West that fails to recognize Catholic Christianity as an integral part of the past and present of western modernity. Every incrimination of Islam as a fundamentalist, anti-modern and anti-western religion could have been directed even more justifiably against Catholicism not long time ago. Moreover, most features of contemporary political Islam which western observers find rightly so reprehensible, including the terrorist methods and the justification of revolutionary violence as an appropriate instrument in the pursuit of political power, can be found in the not too distant past of many western countries and of many modern secular movements. Thus, before attributing these reprehensible phenomena all too hastily to Islamic civilization one should perhaps consider the possibility that global modernity itself somehow generates such practices.

The suggestion that contemporary transformations of Catholicism and Islam, all their crucial differences notwithstanding, can be viewed as parallel, even equivalent, processes of modern religious aggiornamento can be interpreted differently (Casanova, 2005). Modern secular conceptions of religion are likely to interpret all reflexive reformulations of religious traditions either as doctrinal capitulations which make evident, at least to the cynical observer, the vacuity of the claims of those religions to possess transcendent revealed truths valid for all times and places, or as superstructural ideological adjustments to changes in the dominant material base. Religious traditions of course view differently their own hermeneutic task of interpreting and re-evaluating the meaning of their unchanging
principles for changed circumstances. It is by proving their continued relevance and their ability to offer guidance in changed circumstances that religious traditions can attest that their reinterpreted principles are unchanging and universally valid.

The swift democratization of Catholic countries following the Vatican *aggiornamento* demonstrates not so much the fact that at long last the Catholic church gave up its traditional resistance to modernity allowing democratization to proceed and, thus, the final triumph of modernity over tradition, but rather the practical advantages that accrue when actors are able to offer traditional religious legitimation for modern developments. The sacralization of the modern discourse of human rights by the church was the single most important factor in the mobilization of Catholic resources for democratization (Casanova, 1999). The struggles for democratization in Turkey, Iran and Indonesia offer similar lessons. There is no guarantee, indeed it is unlikely, that movements of Islamic revival or renewal will be uniformly conducive to democratization. What is more certain is that democracy is unlikely to grow and thrive in Muslim countries until political actors who are striving for it are also able to ‘frame’ their discourse in a publicly recognizable Islamic idiom. Calls for the privatization of Islam as a condition for modern democracy in Muslim countries (Tibi, 1990) will only produce anti-democratic Islamist responses. By contrast, the public reflexive elaboration of Islam’s normative traditions in response to modern challenges, political learning experiences and global discourses has a chance to generate various forms of public civil Islam which may be conducive to democratization.

Huntington’s thesis has been mostly criticized for its ‘essentialism’ and for its undiluted West-centric hegemonic vision (Riesebrodt, 2000). But in my view, where Huntington is particularly wrong is in his geopolitical conception of civilizations as territorial units akin to nation-states and superpowers, which leads him to anticipate future global conflicts along civilizational fault lines. The analysis misses the fact that globalization represents not only a great opportunity for the old civilizations and world religions to free themselves from the straightjacket of the nation-state, to regain their transnational dimensions and their leading roles in the global center stage. Globalization also represents a great threat insofar as it implies the deterritorialization of all cultural systems. Globalization threatens to dissolve the intrinsic link between sacred time, sacred space and sacred people common to all world religions, and with it the seemingly essential bonds between histories, peoples and territories which have defined all civilizations.

What constitutes the truly novel aspect of the present global condition is precisely the fact that all world religions can be reconstituted for the first time truly as deterritorialized global imagined communities, detached from the civilizational settings in which they have been traditionally embedded. Paraphrasing Arjun Appadurai’s (1996) image of ‘modernity at large’, one could say that the world religions, through the linking of electronic mass media and mass migration, are being reconstituted as deterritorialized global religions ‘at large’. For the world religions globalization offers therefore the opportunity to become for the first time truly world religions, i.e. global, but also the threat of deterritorialization. The opportunities are greatest for those world religions like Catholicism, Islam and Buddhism which always had a transnational structure. The threat is greatest for those still embedded in civilizational territories like Islam and Hinduism. But through global migration they are also becoming global and deterritorialized. Indeed, their diasporas are becoming dynamic centers for their global transformation. Ironically, the diaspora religion par excellence, Judaism, forced to become deterritorialized from the Land of
Israel millennia ago, has become tied again to the physical Land of Israel in the very age of globalization.

**Multiple modernities**

The concept of multiple modernities, first developed by SN Eisenstadt (1974, 1987, 2002) and now gaining increasing acceptance – as attested by many of the papers presented in the congress ‘Culture, Values and the Future of Society’ on which this monograph is based – is a more adequate conceptualization and pragmatic vision of modern global trends than either cosmopolitanism or the clash of civilizations (Arnason, 2003; Eisenstadt et al., 2001). In a certain sense, it shares elements of both. Like cosmopolitanism, it maintains that there are some common elements or traits shared by all ‘modern’ societies that help to distinguish them from their ‘traditional’ or pre-modern forms. In this respect, one can talk of a civilization of modernity. But it does not envision the global expansion of those modern traits as a process of homogenization or convergence that would lead to a single world society or global civilization. Rather, common modern traits or principles attain multiple forms and diverse institutionalizations in various historical contexts. Moreover, many of these diverse institutionalizations are continuous or congruent with the traditional historical civilizations. Thus, there is both a civilization of modernity and the continuous transformation of the pre-modern historical civilizations under modern conditions which themselves help to shape the multiple modernities.

There is no single pattern of modernity. Most of the modern traits may have emerged first in the West, but even there they assumed very different manifestations in different times and in different places. Thus, even in the West one finds multiple modernities which in multifold ways are related with the multiple forms of Christian civilization. Naturally, this multiplicity becomes even more pronounced as non-western societies and civilizations acquire, institutionalize and transform some of those modern traits. Precisely because modernity is a constantly changing formation in multiple directions, one cannot simply define those modern traits as if they were fixed forms.

Without trying to be exhaustive, one could point to some modern traits:

1. The principle of sovereignty of the people and of the nation, along with the ‘providential’ trend toward equalization of conditions and democratization.
2. A reflexive relationship to traditions and identities, mediated by intercivilizational encounters with ‘the other’.
3. A pragmatic historicism that views social change and the future as a collective programmatic construction.
4. The work ethic and vocational asceticism as the regulative principle of the division of labor and of individual worth.
5. Processes of individuation, self-determination, personal worth and human dignity, from the cult of the individual to the institutionalization of universal human rights.

These modern traits are not developed necessarily in contradistinction to or even at the expense of tradition, but rather through the transformation and the pragmatic adjustment of tradition. In this respect, the multiple modernities position shares with the clash of civilizations position the emphasis on the relevance of cultural traditions for the formation
of multiple modernities. Both insist that modernization is not simply westernization. But unlike Huntington, the multiple modernities perspective does not see those modernities simply as a continuation of some essential tradition. All traditions, including the western ones, are radically transformed in the process of modernization.

It is precisely in the different ways in which they conceive of the relationship of tradition and modernity that one can clearly differentiate the three positions. Cosmopolitanism, like the theories of modernization of the 1960s, is still based on a rigid dichotomous contraposition of tradition and modernity, assuming that the more of the one the less of the other. But, in fact, it is well recognized today that societies can become ever more modern while simultaneously reproducing or reconstructing their traditions or inventing new ones. The clash of civilizations, by contrast, emphasizes the essential continuity between tradition and modernity. Western modernity is assumed to be continuous with the western tradition. As other civilizations modernize, rather then becoming ever more like the West, they will also maintain an essential continuity with their respective traditions. Thus, the inevitable clash of civilizations as all modern societies basically continue their diverse and mostly incommensurable traditions.

The multiple modernities position rejects both, the notion of a modern radical break with traditions as well as the notion of an essential modern continuity with tradition. All traditions and civilizations are radically transformed in the processes of modernization, but they also have the possibility of shaping in particular ways the institutionalization of modern traits. The model of *aggiornamento* is perhaps a more adequate image of the dynamic and reciprocal relations between tradition and modernity. Traditions are forced to respond to and adjust to modern conditions, but in the process of reformulating their traditions for modern contexts they also help to shape the particular forms of modernity. No modern culture is simply a continuation of pre-modern traditions, otherwise there would be no common modernity and no common modern traits. But modernity is not simply a homogeneous formation to which traditions have simply to adapt. There is a continuous dynamic relationship whereby multiple traditions help to shape multiple modernities while modernity radically alters all traditions.

Let me offer an illustration of this complex relationship through a reconstruction of the process of Catholic *aggiornamento* of the 1960s and particularly of the Catholic adoption of the modern discourse of human rights, a critical example since the alleged modern universality of human rights is one of the most contentious issues in the debates between the defenders of cosmopolitanism and the defenders of cultural particularism.

From the moment of their emergence at the time of the American and French revolutions, the Catholic church had opposed vehemently the modern principle and the discourse of human rights. In his papal Brief *Caritas* (1791), Pope Pius VI condemned the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man by the French National Assembly, stating that the rights to freedom of religion and freedom of the press were contrary to the divine principles of the church. Pope Gregory XVI reiterated the condemnation in his encyclicals *Mirari Vos* (1832) and *Singulari Nos* (1834). Pius IX included the principle of human rights and most modern freedoms in the *Syllabus* (1864) of errors, pronouncing them anathema and irreconcilable with the Catholic faith. The principle of religious freedom was particularly odious since it implied making equal the true religion and false ones, as well as the separation of church and state.
But as part of the process of aggiornamento of the 1960s, the Catholic church has embraced the secular discourse of human rights, offering a theological justification for it. Pope John XXIII’s encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (1963) was the first to adopt the modern discourse. The Second Vatican Council’s Declaration on Religious Freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae* (1965), recognized the inalienable right of every individual to freedom of conscience, based on the sacred dignity of the human person. Since that time papal pronouncements and episcopal pastoral letters throughout the world have consistently presented the protection of the human rights of every person as the moral foundation of a just social and political global order.

There can be no doubt about the geopolitical impact of this doctrinal transformation upon the democratization of Catholic societies throughout the world. But how are we going to interpret this theological reformulation of the Catholic tradition? Are we going to view it as the final capitulation to the inevitable triumph of secular modernity after centuries of apparently futile resistance? Certainly the very concept of aggiornamento, with its semantic connotation of ‘bringing up to date’ or of ‘catching up’ with the spirit of the age, would seem to warrant such a reading. To a certain extent, this development would seem to confirm Durkheim’s ([1965] [1912]) vision that the cult of the individual was becoming the religion of modernity, but with an ironic and paradoxical twist, since it is the old gods, who according to Durkheim were either dead or dying, the ones who are becoming the carriers of the new religion of modernity. Thus the new religion does not replace the old world religions. Rather the old world religions become carriers of the new religion of modernity and in the process are radically transformed.

Naturally, the Catholic aggiornamento took a particular ‘catholic’ form. Other world religions are undergoing parallel yet also different forms of aggiornamento attuned to their particular traditions and institutional structures. Indeed all world religions are forced to respond to the global expansion of modernity by reformulating their traditions in an attempt to fashion their own particular civilizational versions of modernity. Moreover, they are responding not only to the global challenge of secular modernity, but also to their mutual and reciprocal challenges, as they all undergo multiple processes of aggiornamento and come to compete with one another in the emerging global system of religions. Under conditions of globalization, the world religions do not only draw upon their own traditions but also increasingly upon one another. Intercivilizational encounters, cultural imitations and borrowings, diasporic diffusions, hybridity, creolization and transcultural hyphenations are as much part and parcel of the global present as western hegemony, cosmopolitan homogenization or the clash of civilizations.

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**References**


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