

Religion, International Democracy and Global Governance

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1. Introduction

The most celebrated «return» of religion on the international scene has been considered by analysts, scholars and diplomats, mainly as a confirmation on a wider scale, of the hypothesis of a «post-secular» era. That phenomenon would therefore not be confined to the internal political systems. This should not be read as a completely unexpected and surprising additional implication of the old theory of domestic analogy, that would be in some way vindicated in cultural rather than in political terms. The controversial perspective of the domestic analogy is not the correct way to conceptualize the «contamination» of the international political sphere with religious and even theological categories.

In any case, the international dimension of post-secular trends has not been analyzed in its distinctive characters, since the experts of these phenomena have chosen, on the one side, to focus on the impact of new religious radicalisms on the relations among «civilizations» (adopting a perspective which is mainly sociological and anthropological); on the other side, they have devoted their attention to the possible role that motivations based on religious beliefs can play in the process of conflict prevention and resolution. According to the first account, religious narratives can cause conflicts; for the second account, those same narratives, if reinterpreted, could provide a universal understanding of the aspiration of each identity to find its «right» place in a greater picture .

What is needed, in my opinion, is a reflection on the function of religions in connection with the systemic analysis of the international relations in a phase of global transformation.

If world religions are to be taken seriously in the field of international relations, this must imply an approach to their role in the international system as a structural element (without any pretention of exclusivity or «centrality») rather than a mere cultural phenomenon with only a derivative or secondary influence on world order.

What I intend to do is to propose an examination of religions and religious beliefs in the framework of the so-called *global governance*, moving in three different directions.

First of all, I will make a clear conceptual distinction between the two diverging paradigms of «globalization» and «universalism», embodied in an explicit or implicit way in many world religions.

Secondly, moving from the analytical tools provided, among others, by José Casanova, Benedict Anderson and Alexander Wendt, I plan to verify if and how religions could contribute to the formation of a *collective identity* (which is both symbolic and pluralistic), which would include the system of international relations well beyond the idea of the «society of states».

Finally, I'll try to investigate what kind of attention – if any - world religions would give to new formats of *global governance*, both of formal and institutional nature (like the United Nations) and informal-deliberative character (for instance, the G20), with a special emphasis on the problems raised in relation to their legitimacy and representativeness. I intend to proceed with my analysis bearing in mind the difference between the *polity* and *policies of global governance*, that is, by making a separate analysis of the *structure* and of the *functions* of global governance.

I wish emphasize that the topic «Religion and global governance» is unrelated with actions and initiatives that can be categorized as inter-faith dialogue, faith-based diplomacy and interreligious meetings. It is rather about the way religions conceptualize the world order, how they construct the meaning of such structures in terms of legitimacy, and how they intend to participate to the agenda setting process that takes place in the bodies of global governance.

2. Religions and universalism in the era of globalization

It has become a commonplace to consider globalization as the antithesis of universalism (as it happens in the «Huntington vs. Fukuyama» discourse), but the interplay between the two categories is more complex and nuanced than a mere opposition. This is particularly true when we try to understand how religions adapt, or on the contrary resist to globalizing forces.

In a recent work Olivier Roy (Roy 2010) states that the major religious movements of our times are in a process of «deculturation»; they are becoming “purer” in religious terms while withdrawing from the prevailing culture, especially where that culture is secular, rational, materialistic and hedonistic. Religions, according to professor Roy, are reformatting themselves as global faiths rather than expression of a national culture, since «today's religious revival is first and foremost marked by the uncoupling of culture and religion, whatever the religion may be.» (Roy 2006).

This is a dramatic paradigm change vis-à-vis the opposite trend towards «inculturation» that in Christianity used to refer to the adaptation of the way Church teachings are presented to non-Christian cultures, and to the influence of those cultures to the evolution of these teachings.

In this interpretation, religions are no longer confused with other elements deemed constitutive of identity; on the contrary, they represent a way to «escape» from a «framed» cultural environment and so avoiding to fall into the «identity trap».

But the vision provided by Roy of this process is also a matter of concern, since «the success of all forms of neo-fundamentalism can be explained by the fact that, paradoxically, it vindicates the loss of cultural identity and allows a "pure" religion to be conceptualized independently of all its cultural variations and influences.» (Roy 2006).

This is an accurate description of the «liquid» version of globalization: in Roy's vision, it means «uprooting from given societies in an attempt to develop systems of thought that are no longer linked to a given culture, systems of thought or practices, behavior, taste, and modes of consumption.» (Roy 2006).

From his perspective, José Casanova, in a recent article, points out that religions are affected by the same latent schizophrenia that hits other territorial, political or symbolic aggregations, that is, the contextual presence, in the same narrative, of the attachment to the «roots» and the ambition of a projection on the global scene. Particularism, even localism on the one side, and cosmopolitanism and universalism, on the other side, not only coexist but very often progress together. «Actually – writes Casanova - one find practically everywhere similar tensions between the protectionist impulse to claim religious monopoly over national and civilizational territories and the ecumenical impulse to present one's own particular religion as the response to the universal needs of global humanity» (Casanova 2008: 101-119). Religions are becoming more and more de-territorialized and de-centered, as is happening with Pentecostalism, that Casanova considers «the first truly global religion» and that is the more visible manifestation of an «emerging global denominationalism» (Casanova 2008).

In Casanova's view, it is high time to admit that there are «multiple modernities», among which the one based on Western rationality is only one version and as such does not necessarily represent a universal process of human development.

So, on the one side, religions rightly underline the need to protect cultural and spiritual identities; on the other side, initiatives and fora like the «Alliance of Civilizations» and «Religions for Peace» help in creating the awareness of a shared identity, a collective identity that can be crucial if we really want to see a concrete implementation of the idea of global common goods, such as the protection of the environment and the availability of food and water for all the inhabitants of the planet.

If religions «go global» without «strings attached», this phenomenon could be conceptualized also as a way for religions to go beyond the shortcomings and contradictions of globalization, if globalization is to be understood (according to Fukuyama's interpretation) as a process of worldwide diffusion of one dominant culture.

This process would give religions the chance to propose themselves in terms of interpretations of the world with the ambition to embody some level of universalism, that is, some critical vision of the reality which can be an alternative way of understanding the global era.

3. *World-scale «imagined community» and «universal collective identity».*

From the standpoint of the study of international theory, one field of research could be exploring a possible constructive role of the process of «de-culturation» of religions, which has been studied by Olivier Roy, or «de-territorialization» of religions, if we want to adopt Casanova's terminology.

For Casanova, global religions are progressively incorporating features that can be described as forms of generalization of the Islamic notion of «umma» as transnational imagined religious communities that «present fundamental challenges to both to international relations theories which are still functioning within the premises of a Westphalian international system and to secular cosmopolitan theories of globalization» (Casanova 2008).

In other words, we should consider the possibility that the process of deconstructing the territorial and culture-specific frame of religions would imply the destruction of some identities but also the assembling of new elements capable of creating more comprehensive and more inclusive structures of meaning.

When Benedict Anderson wrote about «imagined communities» he described them as the product of the fragmentation of the medieval universalism, and as the process of secularization and individualization of an ethnic-cultural-religious complex into the new frame of the nation.

What we might be experiencing today is a sort of reverse process, in which religions try to rebuild their universal claims for peace and unity without necessarily destroying the nations, but by extending the scale of the global imagined community beyond the traditional boundaries of the State.

Anderson argued that any nationalism is a particular kind of cultural artefact. A cultural product that by the end of the eighteenth century was reproduced in different regional contexts. As Anderson wrote, the creation of these artefacts «was the spontaneous distillation of a complex

“crossing” of discrete historical forces, but that, once created, they became “modular”, capable of being transplanted, with varying degrees of self-consciousness, to a great variety of social terrains, to merge and be merged with a correspondingly wide variety of political and ideological constellations.» (Anderson 1991:4)

Now, it is important to note that, in Anderson’s view, a nation as a product of cultural imagination should not be confused with the notion of «invention». An *imagined* community is not an *imaginary* community. What counts for the «imagination» is the *scale* of the social and political body which goes well beyond the possibility of a direct experience of the subject. As Anderson put it, «all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined». (Anderson 1991: 6)

Another interesting perspective is provided by the constructivist approach to international relations, especially as far as the implications of the notion of «collective identity» are concerned. According to Alexander Wendt, the possibilities for collective action in international relations cannot be explained in full without assuming that interaction at the systemic level *changes* state identities and interests.

Wendt goes on by stressing that insights from critical international relations and integration theories suggest how collective identity among states could emerge *endogenously* at the systemic level.

For Wendt, «the key structures in the states system are intersubjective, rather than material»; and «state identities and interests are in important part constructed by these social structures, rather than given exogenously to the system by human nature or domestic politics». For Wendt, «intersubjective systemic structures consist of the shared understandings, expectations, and social knowledge embedded in international institutions and threat complexes, in terms of which states define (some of) their identities and interests.» (Wendt 1994)

Now, I must clarify that whereas the idea of a collective identity formed through reiterate interaction is an interesting and plausible hypothesis, the next step proposed by Wendt – the birth of an «international state» – seems to be an outcome much more complex to achieve or to recognize in the present status of international relations. Wendt refers to the international state as the growing internationalization of political authority. Such an internationalization consists fundamentally in «the emergence of state powers at the international level that are not concentrated in a single actor but distributed across transnational structures of political authority and constitute a structural transformation of the Westphalian states system. Collective identity formation is an essential aspect of such a process.» (Wendt 1994).

I think that it would be more accurate to say that, more than the internationalization of the traditional state powers, we are witnessing the transformation of the very notion of power in terms of its dissemination and fragmentation (what Foucault would define the «microphysics of power»), its nature («soft power», «smart power»), and its agents (non-state actors, transnational organizations).

I think it's important to retain from Wendt's perspective the process he describes rather than the endgame he suggests.

4. Religions and international democracy

This leads me to the next step of my analysis, which has to do with the relations between religions and the concept and practice of international democracy.

There are many ways to conceptualize in political terms the relatively new notion of «international democracy».

The first meaning of the concept has to do with procedures and decision-making mechanisms of the «international community» understood as a web of international organizations both of inter-governmental nature and supranational character. In this version, international democracy refers to the principle of equal sovereignty of States and to fair and politically justified rights and «votes» of governments in international bodies.

Another conception of international democracy is less state-centered and more focused on participation of individuals and groups to the decision-making process of international organizations and to their ability to influence political choices and agendas at international level. This second version could be better defined as global or transnational democracy. The debate on the obsolescence of the features of the «Westphalian state» and on the creation of political conditions for a cosmopolitan citizenship (a contemporary, partial version of the Kantian project for «perpetual peace») is very relevant but it would take me off road. To be brief, I fully share the analysis of David Held and Anthony Mc Grew when they affirm that «the contemporary world order is best understood as a highly complex, interconnected and contested order in which the interstate system is increasingly embedded within an evolving system of multilayered regional and global governance. There are multiple, overlapping political processes at work at the present historical conjuncture.» (Held and McGrew 2002:130).

This perspective is more complex when compared to the global democracy model, and has been defined by the authors as the domain of a «cosmopolitan social democracy» nurtured by some

of the most important values of social democracy – such as the rule of law, political equality, democratic politics, social justice, social solidarity and economic effectiveness. For the «cosmopolitan social democracy» approach, those principles should be applied to the new «global constellation» of economics and politics. (Held and McGrew 2002: 131)

I will not deal with these two notions of international democracy; my perspective is more modest, since I'm concerned with some more fundamental or «primordial» aspects of the international system, and particularly the debate on the legitimacy of the international order. Legitimacy is the result of many elements, including the composition of the political bodies considered, their deliberative patterns and, last but not least, the very outcome of the decision-making process. In several discussions regarding the legitimacy of the new bodies of the global governance, like the G20, what seems to create consensus is the obvious statement that those international fora, in order to be legitimate, must first and foremost demonstrate their usefulness. That is, they must be perceived not as perfectly representative, but as reasonably functional and effective. Other elements of legitimacy are considered complementary and optional.

In particular, as Jonathan Fox and Shmuel Sandler point out, «there is very little in the international relations literature that directly addresses the role of religious legitimacy in international relations». (Fox and Sandler 2004:36).

Religious legitimacy in the international relations should be understood in a radically different meaning vis-à-vis the tradition of the metaphysical foundation and justification of the power in the internal order. According to Fox and Sandler, «there are three reasons to believe that religious legitimacy should be influential in international relations. First, normative factors are having an increasing influence on international relations. Second, the growing literature on instrumentalism demonstrates that other cultural factors such as nationalism and ethnicity have provided legitimacy for political activities. Third, identity is clearly an influence on international politics and religion is an influence on identity» (Fox and Sandler 2004:45). I consider relevant in this paper two of the three factors of religious legitimacy listed by Fox and Sandler: on the one side, the normative functions of religions regarding global governance; on the other side, their potentialities in forging or strengthening collective identities. I already dealt above with the process of identity formation; in the final paragraphs I will consider a few aspects of the normative power of religions in the context of global governance.

Other interesting suggestions regarding legitimacy in the international system come from the approach known as «intercultural construction of global democracy», which is based on the assumption that the prevailing frameworks of global governance lack democratic legitimacy on the

grounds of western cultural domination. The conceptualization of global democracy should come as a result of a an interregional, intercultural, interdisciplinary, ideologically plural and action-oriented epistemological dialogue.

The main aim of this approach is «to counter the ideational inequalities that arise when certain ways of knowing the world are arbitrarily subordinated and sometimes also forcibly repressed» and to explore how cultural unilateralism in global governance can be replaced with a «positive inter-culturality». (Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation 2010).

It is widely recognized that if we want to put in place a functioning global governance, a certain degree of «like-mindedness» among the members would be necessary, although it is clear that no real effectiveness is possible if we seek a full «commonality of values». To use Wendt's terminology, we may need at least some low-intensity or thin «collective identity» if we really want to put in place a functional and legitimate structure of global governance.

In many religious traditions we can find the same basic idea of «universal brotherhood», or «human family» which has been dismissed for a long time as an ethical aspiration irrelevant for the international order and uninfluential in terms of the adoption of policies that reflect asymmetries of power and interests. That position has been considered, in political and diplomatic circles as an irenic, utopian perspective, without any roots in reality, and with no practical impact.

On the contrary, I think that religions could give, through the concept and practice of universal brotherhood, some more concrete and democratic meaning to the vague and somewhat oligarchic idea of global governance.

According to Richard Falk, there is a «uniting feature of religious consciousness, the oneness of human family that can give rise to an ethos of human solidarity, the unity of all creation, and, with it, the sense of both the wholeness of human experience and the dignity of the individual». (Falk 2003: 196)

There are many possibilities for religions to forge pragmatic, pro-active and creative ways of combining justice, community and dialogue in international relations.

So, my provisional conclusion is that the notion of religious legitimacy in the international system is unrelated to the theoretical reflection on the source and the nature of power, and it is rather connected to the inclusiveness and to the efficacy of the international bodies.

5. Religions and global governance

5.1 The structure of global governance

In fact, when it comes to the structures of the global governance, one important debate refers to the representativeness or level of inclusion of the different formats. The prevailing trend in international circles has lately been to move beyond the G8, which is no longer considered representative from the economic, demographic, and «civility» standpoints (e.g., the exclusion of Africa and predominantly Muslim countries) toward a G13/G14, G16, finally a G20. The conditional variability of the future governance group is not bound to emergency functions or to erratic requirements for inclusion, but is linked to the global issue in focus.

If the objective of governance must be «effective multilateralism», a «pre-negotiating phase» is needed to make it possible to resolve some preliminary matters, e.g., defining a realistic negotiating framework within which to discuss an issue or to identify the crucial points on which to focus the debate in international fora. In other words, the goal of the governance bodies should be «consensus building» (facilitating role) rather than «decision making» (i.e. «world government»). It should represent a place to exercise «deliberative democracy» at the global level, thereby allowing an exchange of opinions, examination of proposals, discussion of priorities on the world agenda in view of their formal examination and eventual approval in multilateral institutional or regional fora.

That's is why it is crucial to define a consistent set of principles that should characterise the structure of informal governance club(s): democracy/representativeness, legitimacy, effectiveness, inclusiveness. Among the many aspects of the inclusiveness, religious diversity should be taken into account as a way of strengthening the legitimacy of these informal bodies. For instance, in the G8 there is no country with a Muslim majority; and there is no doubt that the presence in the G20 of countries like Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey constitutes an important element in the creation of a more balanced representation of one of the world's most widespread religions. This conclusion should not sound surprising. In the UN system the geographical representation in the main bodies is considered one way to ensure a pluralistic structure of that universal organization. In the EU there is a fierce battle about the predominant languages. Those are examples to what extent pluralism and cultural factors are considered important element to strengthen the legitimacy of international organizations. Why exclude religion from this puzzle?

At the same time, I must state my deep scepticism on the initiatives taken so far to organize a sort of «parallel» or complementary structure of global governance based on religions and religious leaders. The case in point here is «The World Council of Religious Leaders», which is an independent body, proposed on the occasion of the Millennium World Peace Summit at the United Nations. The launch of the World Council took place in Bangkok on June 2002. At the conclusion this event a complex and formal Charter was adopted, including composition of the bodies, sub-committees, voting system, regional, national and global organizational levels.

More useful to my opinion is the idea of gathering leaders of the world's religions and spiritual traditions on the occasion of major political summits like the G8/G20. In those cases, religion can foster legitimacy of the international bodies not through direct and permanent representation, but through supporting or advocating for specific policies on political and moral grounds.

Another promising framework allowing religions dealing with global issues in an structured way is «Religions for Peace», a large international coalition of representatives from the world's great religions dedicated to promoting peace. The network's purpose is to create multi-religious partnerships aimed at «stopping war, ending poverty, and protecting the earth.» This organization has a clear self-conscience of the potential impact of religious mobilization to help solving global issues: «Religious communities – you can read in its mission statement - are the largest and best-organized civil institutions in the world, claiming the allegiance of billions across race, class, and national divides. These communities have particular cultural understandings, infrastructures, and resources to get help where it is needed most.»

As for the structure of international governance, it is interesting to compare a least two approaches that seem to adopt very different perspectives.

The first one is that outlined in the encyclical letter «Caritas in Veritate» (CiV) of Pope Benedict XVI, where the perspective of a «world Authority» is envisaged in a new way, in continuity with a longstanding Catholic tradition. The main concept is the notion of «family of nations» that is not a sort of congress of like-minded governments, but a political structure that, in the words of Benedict XVI, «can acquire real teeth».

The first principle for the political legitimacy of such Authority is effectiveness, understood as the capacity «to deliver» concrete and tangible results on a global scale: «There is urgent need of a true world political authority» - states the encyclical - «in order to manage the global economy, to revive economies hit by the crisis; to avoid any deterioration of the present crisis and the greater

imbalances that would result; to bring about integral and timely disarmament, food security and peace; to guarantee the protection of the environment and to regulate migration.» (CiV: §67).

A second principle has to do with the established juridical nature of that body: «Such an authority would need to be regulated by law» (CiV: §67).

Moreover, it should be an Authority crafted according the respects of the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity: no centralization of powers would be justified if the political goods of a community could be achieved through local actions.

The general mandate of such an Authority would be to seek «to establish the common good and to make a commitment to securing authentic integral human development» (CiV: §67).

Furthermore, «such an authority – goes on the encyclical - would need to be universally recognized and to be vested with the effective power to ensure security for all, regard for justice, and respect for rights» (CiV: §67). There is a generic statement about the need to ensure compliance with the decision of the World Authority from all parties; but we all know that compliance is a function of legitimacy, and legitimacy is in turn a possible outcome of the structure and of the policies of the body. There is however a reference to the risk of international law being conditioned «by the balance of power among the strongest nations.» (CiV: §67).

More specific is the position on the formats of global governance taken by the 2010 Religious Leaders' Summit, where the participants criticized the composition of such bodies, by pointing out how «power and economic dominance are the basis for inclusion in a G8 and G20 global leaders' summit» and denouncing, although in a footnote of the document, the fact that «not represented in these summits are 172 members of the United Nations where proposals to address structural causes of poverty and ecological devastation are currently under discussion.»

On the other end of the spectrum, we find the Buddhist idea of global governance, that rests less on organizational solutions than on the method of «dialogue». There is no «Buddhist system», no set of rules that will insure the implementation of a global ethics. One Buddhist perspective prefers a bottom-up approach in building global governance, and urges to engage with the «non-dialogic» elements of the different cultural traditions. «In order for a new vision of world order to emerge – we read in a Buddhist paper - it is essential that we stop thinking in the old paradigms and unquestioningly moving along the old continuums.» (Young, Hauber, Worthington and Hall: 2004). Structures, in the Buddhist outlook, are considered useful only if they are composed by people ready to engage in constructive dialogue. «It will accomplish nothing to bring the people's voice to

a deliberation if it serves to amplify a cacophony of sectarian hate.» (Young, Hauber, Worthington and Hall: 2004).

Buddhists propose a shared vision of a «worldwide civil society» *imagined* as a human global neighborhood, and characterized by the civility of its discourse.

Buddhist theory advocates what has been termed the «cognitive» approach to international relations. Under this theory of international relations, differences and conflicts between nations exist, but are eventually solved by continued interaction and sharing of ideas. (Sheng-yen 1998).

There are also references to the enlargement of the current bodies of global governance. In a paper of the Soka Gakkai («Value Creating Society»), a Buddhist movement, a support for an expansion of the current summit system is clearly stated in order to include the participation of such countries as China and India to form a «summit of responsible countries» which should promote the wider sharing of global responsibilities (Ikeda 2008).

There has been also an attempt to conceptualize a more comprehensive Buddhist paradigm of international relations through the lens of the theory of «Codependent Origination», «a non-state-centric theory» that «actively posits an interdependent and environmentally sustainable, non-violent world that prioritizes human and environmental security above short-term national or corporate interests» (Grey 2006).

5.2 *The functions of global governance*

When we deal with the topic of «Religion and global governance» in terms of «policies» of global governance, there are at least two fields that we should briefly explore: the relationship between religions and global public goods (namely environment, health, stability) and the relationship between religions and human security. These are two related aspects of what Richard Falk defines as «humane global governance», as opposed to the emergence of «inhumane social patterns» at the global level. Falk is persuaded that «religious visions provide a potential political grounding for humane global governance that cannot arise otherwise». (Falk 2003:197) Religions based on the paradigm of inclusivity can play an important role in strengthening «globalization from below» and provide an alternative vision to the Westphalian tradition that usually associates solidarity with territorial sovereign states. (Falk 2003: 197)

5.2.1 Religions and “global public goods” (GPG)

As far as the concept of “global public goods” (GPG) is concerned, such definition usually refers to the following criteria: global public goods are those goods whose benefits, or costs, are a matter of concern for the whole humanity in geographic terms, whose effects have strong inter-generational implications and whose supply requires strong co-operation among states. In addition to principles like the one of non-exclusiveness (the good must be available for all) and non-competition (the use of one unit of good by one person must not undermine the others’ right to use it), GPG must also fulfil other criteria, such as:

- geographical standard (GPG should ideally include all countries);
- socio-economic standard (GPG should regard all social groups);
- inter-generational standard (GPG should be available to future generations).

Examples of «final» global public goods are: multidimensional welfare («capacity» approach; i.e. health and education); an economic order which is open and inclusive («freedom from necessity»); peace; climatic stability; financial stability; biodiversity; control of infectious diseases.

«Intermediate» global public goods are means of international co-operation, such as: FAO; Kyoto protocols; WHO; MDG’s; «Global standards». (Kaul, Inge; Grunberg, Isabelle; Stern, Marc 1999)

Beyond these technical definitions, there are interesting examples of compelling conceptualizations of what really constitute a «global common good» stemming from religious perspectives. The most philosophical one comes from the works of Raimon Panikkar, who recently passed away, and can be summarized as the «cosmotheandric» vision of the reality. (Panikkar 1993) For Panikkar, knowledge and experience cannot be divided into three realms – the divine, the natural and the human - but all the components combine harmoniously and give us - so to speak - a complete «outlook» of the universe. This interrelation among the different aspects of life and moral beliefs presents a consistent case for the respect and preservation of the environment, since damaging one element of the triadic structure would imply destroying the quality of the human presence in the world and the possibility of a comprehensive epistemological appraisal of it.

A vision more in tune with rational western culture is the work of Teilhard de Chardin, who writes of the unfolding design of the cosmos towards an Omega Point in the future: he proposes the theory known as «orthogenesis», that is the idea that evolution occurs in a directional, goal driven

way. Generating unnecessary distress and even chaos in this movement would have unforeseeable consequences for the evolution itself (Teilhard de Chardin 1975).

In much more practical terms, the final document of the 2010 Religious Leaders' Summit urges the world leaders «to address the immediate needs of the most vulnerable while simultaneously making structural changes to close the growing gap between rich and poor; to prioritize long-term environmental sustainability and halt climate change, while addressing its impacts on the poor; to invest in peace and remove factors that feed cycles of violent conflict and costly militarism.»

5.2.2 Religions and Human Security

From an ethical-hermeneutical point of view, an important area on convergence of the different religious outlooks of the policies of global governance could be found in the wide domain of what has been called «human security».

Generally speaking, the term «human security» must be understood as complementary to the traditional concept of «security», which is mainly focused on defence and protection (of people, borders, resources, territories, urban settlements). The concept of human security includes questions and problems that cannot be handled by using the traditional «(hard) security tools». It implies the ideas of «opportunity» and «capacity».

This means to insure that all individual and communities enjoy some reasonable level of protection against threats, not only to their existence, but also to their connections and values. Human security is the horizontal and holistic dimension of security: state-centered security and security understood in a Hobbesian way, in terms of preservation of life are both essential, but are only parts of the overall picture. Religions could give a contribution to shape a concept of security which is wider than the traditional one. For instance, in international relations we hear a lot about security communities understood as alliance of states, but much less about communitarian security, that is an idea of security based on the commonality of personal and social conditions, based on an alliance of individual and open communities well beyond the traditional national borders.

The United Nations Development Program in its 1994 Human Development Report lists four fundamental characteristics of human security:

«1. Human security is a universal concern that is relevant to people everywhere, in rich nations and poor.

2. The components of human security are interdependent. When the security of people is endangered anywhere in the world, all nations are likely to get involved.

3. Human security is easier to ensure through early prevention than later intervention.

4. Human security is people-centered. It is concerned with people who live and breathe in a society, how freely they exercise their many choices, how much access they have to market and social opportunities, and whether they live in conflict or in peace.»

So, it is quite clear that in this context «security» is not meant in the state-centric/military common understanding of the term, but rather as related to the person and his social sphere.

One variation of the notion of human security is the broader concept of *shared security*. As we read in the final call of the IV Summit of Religious Leaders on the occasion of the G8, held in Rome in June 2009, the term «security» is used in a new way. The word «shared» is added «to draw attention to a fundamental moral conviction: the wellbeing of each is related to the wellbeing of others and to our environment. Shared security focuses on the fundamental inter-relatedness of all persons and the environment. It includes a comprehensive respect for the interconnectedness and dignity of all life and acknowledges the fundamental fact that we all live in one world». Moreover, «shared security is concerned with the full continuum of human relations from relationship amongst individuals to the ways that people are organized in nations and states. It follows that the security of one actor in international relations must not be detrimental to another.»

6. Conclusion

My thesis is that it would be a mistake to underestimate the influence of the visions and proposals concerning global governance based on religious attitudes.

First of all, at an *epistemological* level, the reason rests on the fact that in the current reformulation of both the *polity* and *policies* of global governance the quest for legitimacy is too important to dismiss in advance any plausible field of investigation.

In addition that, there is a more practical or *phenomenological* reason to consider attentively the relation between religion and global governance, as it is more goal-driven.

The literature on secularism shows that there are at least 5 meanings of secularization, if we consider it a process with different but not necessarily sequential phases: *constitutional secularization* (the end of the special role granted to a specific religion); *policy secularization* (the assumption by the state of public functions previously ensured by religions); *institutional secularization* (the loss of influence of religion in the political system through the activities of

religion-oriented political parties and pressure groups), *agenda secularization* (issues, needs and problems considered relevant in the political process no longer have a specifically religious character); *ideological secularization* (the evaluation and assessment of the structure and legitimacy of the political system and of the policies adopted and implemented are no longer rooted in religious beliefs). (Haynes 1998:3; Moyser 1991:1-27).

Scott Thomas argues that religious ideas or beliefs can be categorized as *worldviews*, *principled beliefs*, and *causal beliefs*. World religions provide worldviews with the ambition to embody both cultural symbolism and scientific rationality. Religious ideas can also be considered as principled beliefs, since they are in many cases part of larger traditions that allow for a pluralistic debate on the elements of what is virtue and what constitutes a good life. Finally, religious ideas can also be conceptualized as casual beliefs when they play a role in influencing choices and strategies of the political actors based on wider conceptions of the common good that could be ultimately seen as the slow sedimentation of convictions originally disseminated by religious creeds. (Thomas 2005: 107-108)

What constitutes, in my opinion, a strategic goal of world religions in relation to global governance is to promote a positive and deliberate *agenda secularization*, that is, influencing political decisions with a potential global reach without explicitly linking them to any specific metaphysical or transcendental remote motivation. We can also depict this process, which might seem counter-intuitive, in terms of direct or indirect influence of religious ideas regarding the global order and global policies. The challenge for world religions in relation to global governance is to transform the universal and somewhat abstract claims for a just and legitimate world order into *causal beliefs* for global decision-makers.

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