Religion in Global Civil Society

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The Politics of Religion and the Morality of Globalization

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The thesis I wish to examine in this chapter is that globalization can facilitate the politics of religion. It can do this in ways that enable the latter to infuse some moral restraints on the dynamics of economic globalization in the interest of social justice. Because such synergy and mediation would need to be initiated and promoted by human agency, as explained later, I propose that an emerging global civil society can play that role. This thesis is premised on three propositions:

1. Religious doctrine and practice are influenced by dynamic processes of change and adaptation within and among communities of believers, in response to a variety of internal and external factors.
2. The forces and processes of economic globalization are unlikely to be responsive to social justice concerns without the influence of some moral frame of reference.
3. There is an emerging global civil society that is partly motivated by religion and facilitated by globalization, which can promote the transformation of exclusive tendencies of religious communities and thereby enable them to infuse moral constraints on economic globalization through transreligious solidarity and consensus in the interest of social justice.

I will begin with brief working definitions of "religion," "globalization," and "global civil society" in terms of aspects of each paradigm that are problematic for my thesis. Through further elaboration on my working definition and the tripartite premise of

my analysis, I will argue that those problematic aspects can be transformed through the proposed synergy and mediation among all three paradigms.

From this perspective, though not necessarily for other purposes, religion can be defined as a system of belief, practices, institutions, and relationships that provides the primary source of moral guidance for believers. Religion also commonly serves as an effective framework for political and social motivation and mobilization among believers. These general features of at least the major religious traditions would make them good candidates for infusing moral restraints on economic globalization if the necessary interreligious and intrareligious consensus and solidarity can be generated and sustained.

But religion is unlikely to play this role to the extent that religious communities perceive the doctrine of their faith in orthodox and exclusive terms that suppress dissent within the tradition and diminish solidarity and cooperation with those deemed to be nonbelievers or heretics. Such hegemonic and exclusive tendencies will properly undermine the emergence of a dynamic global consensus on social policy within and among religious communities that is capable of checking the excesses of economic globalization.

However, as I will argue later, this tendency can and should be resisted within the context of each religious community, which is usually more heterogeneous and pluralistic than claimed by the advocates of religious exclusivity. As I attempt to illustrate with reference to Hinduism and Islam later in this chapter, it is possible and desirable to interpret religious traditions in more inclusive ways that enhance possibilities of interreligious solidarity and cooperation. This is particularly true, I suggest, under current conditions of accelerated and intensified globalization. But the possibility of contesting dominant religious doctrine though the viability of alternative understandings of each tradition is contingent on a variety of factors, both internal and external to the religion in question. This process of contestation is what I call the "politics of religion," which can have different outcomes, including the possibility of bringing moral restraints to bear on economic globalization.

By "economic globalization" I am referring to an increasing assimilation of economies through international integration of investment, production, and consumption that is driven by market values. The primary purpose of globalization in this sense is the achievement of rapid and endless corporate growth, fueled by the search for access to natural resources, new and cheaper labor, and new markets. From this perspective, economic globalization is a means to reduce barriers to corporate activity, without regard for social justice, environmental, or public health concerns (International Forum on Globalization [IFG] 2002, 19–20). The question is therefore whether it is possible to adjust the operation of economic globalization in favor of greater social justice. By making this definition specific to "economic" globalization, I mean to suggest that there is a "social" dimension to the concept that can be used to promote the social responsibility of economic actors. This is what I call the

morality of globalization. The question is, who is going to moderate the harsh social consequences of economic globalization, and how can that be realized?

It seems to me that there is an emerging global civil society (GCS) that is manifested in an underlying social reality of networks of transnational, national, and local actors who are engaged in negotiations about civil matters with governmental, intergovernmental, and transnational business actors at various levels. This network has become "thicker," stronger, more durable, and more effective over the last decade of the twentieth century (Anheier, Glasius, Kaldor 2001, 4). GCS feeds on and reacts to economic globalization, while seeking to expand its scope to include interconnectedness in political, social, and cultural spheres. These additional dimensions of globalization tend to promote and enhance a growing global consciousness of shared human vulnerability to political violence, poverty, and disease. The follow-up question for the purposes of the thesis of this chapter is, under which conditions can GCS effectively check the exclusivity of religion and lack of social concern in economic globalization?

Upon incorporating these tentative working definitions, the thesis of this chapter is that there are possibilities of synergy and mediation, whereby the exclusivity and intolerance of some religious communities can be moderated by the impact of economic globalization, while the latter's lack of concern for social justice can be redressed through the moral guidance of religion. In other words, GCS can play a mediatory role within and among religious traditions, as well as in relation to economic globalization. GCS can stimulate the internal transformation of religious communities to promote consensus on universal values of social justice and pluralism, as well as influence the forces of economic globalization in favor of these values. In short, I am calling for a tripartite process of mutual influence and transformation within and among all three paradigms.

As already indicated, this thesis and analysis are dependent on the critical role of *human agency* in realizing and sustaining the transformative possibilities of each of these paradigms. By "human agency" I mean that human actors can conceive and realize the sort of religious transformation that can pursue the accountability of various actors in economic globalization for the social consequences of their actions. The term is also intended to emphasize that only human actors can achieve the mediatory potential of GCS. In other words, all aspects of the tripartite processes of mutual influence and transformation are dependent on the choices people make, as well as how they act on the choices they make.

In emphasizing the centrality of human agency in this context, however, I am not assuming that it would necessarily work in favor of the transformations, synergy, and mediation I am proposing. Indeed, my analysis is premised on the expectation that the human agency of some actors will surely be opposed to such objectives, but that it can be countered by those in favor of

the proposed synergy and mediation. Accordingly, the question is how to secure the best possible conditions for human agency to operate within and among religion, globalization, and GCS in favor of the thesis of this chapter. Before discussing this and related questions in the last section of this chapter, it may be helpful to further elaborate on each of these three paradigms.

Politics of Religion

For the purposes of this analysis, the premise of what I call the "politics of religion" is that religion everywhere is *socially constructed*, dynamic, and embedded in socioeconomic and political power relations, always in the particular context of specific religious communities. This premise is clearly indicated by the variety of interpretations within each religious tradition, and of their local adaptations at various stages of history or in different settings during the same historical period. The realities of competing interpretations and contingency of prevalence of one view over another will be illustrated with a brief review of two contrasting views of Hinduism, its role in politics, and its relationship to the state in India. I will also attempt to make the same point by a similar contrast between Islamic fundamentalism and liberal interpretations of Islam. The experience of liberation theology in Latin American will be presented in the last section of this chapter to illustrate the possibilities of an integrated religious and civil society response to the inequities of economic globalization.

Hinduism between Gandhi and Religious Nationalism

One view of religion that clearly illustrates the thesis of this chapter is the one Gandhi articulated and sought to implement during the struggle for the independence of India. For him religion was a source of possibilities of social, political, and cultural identity and expression that were neither restricted to a set of practices or personal beliefs nor ultimately delimited by scripture (Parekh 1997, 37). The way he understood and applied his conception of religion drew on his reading of Hinduism, but in the sense of "the peculiar mix of classical and folk Hinduism and the unselfconscious Hinduism by which most Indians, Hindus as well as non-Hindus, live" (Nandy 1983, 104). This flexible and unsystematic framework allowed Gandhi to incorporate insights from diverse perspectives to define religion as an expression of social, cultural, and political values.

Gandhi's "thinking was always inherently anti-systematic, and operated as a kind of radical cultural eclecticism.... [He] freely borrowed ideas from different religions, particularly Christianity, Buddhism, and more strategically

from Islam, [and produced] creative synthesis of different aspects of different religious" (Young 2001, 346–47). His notion of religion offers those to whom religion is an important dimension of their worldview and normative frame of reference the possibility of full membership in, and engagement with, pluralistic civil society at the local, national, and global level. To him, the spiritual was the foundation that orients *all* aspects of life, and religious expression is entwined with cultural, political, and social values, whereby religious identity is neither the sole province of the individual nor the only basis for political or social action. Religion provides the individual an ethic to live by (*swaraj*, or self-rule), a mode and medium of political action and expression, and a basis of political independence (Young 2001, 338).

Gandhi saw tradition, politics, economics, social relations, and autonomy as tightly linked to what is currently referred to as "development," but he was critical and suspicious of modernization (which today would be called economic globalization) because it undermines harmony (Terchek 1998, 119). He believed that the danger of modernization is that it diminishes the sense of duty individuals once carried for one another by enmeshing them in interlocking dependencies as consumers and producers who are strangers to each other and therefore do not care much for one another. Instead, he sought "a society of mutuality among people who know and care about each other and who recognize the many debts they owe one another" (Terchek 1998, 110).

In relation to the thesis of this chapter in particular, Gandhi regarded as problematic the distinction between the public and the private sphere, whereby morality belongs in the private sphere, and economic choice and political freedom in the public sphere. He questioned the notion of autonomy associated with modernization when it constricts and diminishes the lives of any segment of the population. For him, the moral costs of modernization *must be part of the calculation* about any supposed increase in autonomy that modernization delivers. Since institutions alone could not ensure autonomy and freedom, Gandhi sought to hold them accountable to moral autonomy and equality (Terchek 1998, 111). He also insisted that "any new technology must be *primarily judged* by its effects on the present generation, particularly its *most vulnerable members*, and not by some future good (108, emphasis added). Gandhi also "reminds us that people have multiple needs that are affected by the economy, not just economic ones" (109).

As if to confirm Gandhi's apprehensions about modernization and traditional understandings of religion, a drastically different view of religion and politics was advanced by the Hindu fundamentalism of the Bharatiya Janat Party (BJP) in India during the 1990s. For our purposes here in particular, there seems to be a strong association between religious radicalism and economic globalization in the rise of the BJP to national power. The distinct subset of the Indian population that can be identified as the core of the support for the movement were the same groups who have been most

threatened by the new economic liberalization initiatives aimed at greater privatization and increased global competitiveness (Freitag 1996, 226–27). There were of course other factors in the rise of Hindu fundamentalism. For example, a major sequence of events in this process was the destruction of the Babri mosque on December 6, 1992, at Ayodhya that led to widespread communal tension and Hindu-Muslim riots. Claiming that this mosque had been built on the site of the destroyed Ram temple (birthplace of the god Ram), Hindu nationalists launched a political protest movement that seeks to erect a Ram temple on the site of the Babri mosque.

Thus, as often happens in a variety of settings, religious symbols and discourse were used by disadvantaged groups at the local and national level to mobilize politically in face of the harsh economic consequences of globalization. In the case of India, religion and fears about the impact of globalization combined in propelling a right-wing party with a strong religious agenda into controlling the national government of one of the most religiously and ethnically diverse countries in the world. In terms of the thesis of this chapter, does this mean the permanent loss of the Gandhian view of religion and politics, or is it a setback that can be reversed under certain favorable conditions?

Islamic Fundamentalism and Liberal Islam

A similar politics of religion can be observed in postcolonial Islamic societies in different parts of the world. For our purposes here, the problem with fundamentalists, whether associated with religious, secular, nationalistic, or other forms of ideology, is the determination to mobilize all the resources of their societies for the realization of their own specific vision of the public good. Each form of fundamentalism will probably have its own characteristic features and particular forms of discourse in relation to its own frame of reference. With this caveat in mind, I am using the term here as a shorthand reference to a complex and controversial ideological and political manifestation of the politics of religion, while focusing on its Islamic expression because of my familiarity with the subject and concern about its implications.

What is commonly known today as Islamic fundamentalism can be found in different stages of history of various societies, always as an exceptional response to severe crisis rather than the normal state of affairs among Islamic societies, or continuously in any one of them. This is true for the first Islamic civil war of the mid–seventh century, the jihad movements of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century West Africa and Sudan, to the current movements in various parts of the Muslim world (Al-Azm 1993–94; Lapidus 2002, 416–28). In other words, Islamic fundamentalism should be understood as an indigenous response to profound social, political, and economic crises and *not* as

the inevitable outcome of Islamic religious scripture or history. As both a product and an agent of social change in Islamic societies, emerging as a result of certain configurations of factors in each case, and seeking to influence the course of events in favor of its own social and political objectives, each movement is best understood in its own specific context (An-Na'im 2002a). Whatever one may think of such movements, their declared hostility to other religious communities and repression of internal dissent seriously undermine the prospects of interreligious and intrareligious consensus and solidarity that are needed for GCS to effectively check the excesses of economic globalization.

Islamic fundamentalist movements tend to claim legitimacy and seek political power in the postcolonial context of various Islamic societies in the name of the right of Muslim peoples to self-determination through the strict observance of Sharia (traditional formulations of the normative system of Islam). Accordingly, I suggest, they should be judged by the validity of their claim to represent and exercise genuine national self-determination and by their ability to deliver on that promise. One question that can be raised in this regard is how to verify the claim of Islamic fundamentalists that they represent the totality of national population at home, especially when they suppress all political dissent or opposition as religious heresy. Another question is whether such movements really understand, and operate under, the realities of global relations under which the right to self-determination can be realized today.

On the first count, Islamic fundamentalists must maintain a total and credible commitment to democracy at home so that Muslims can continue to express their support or opposition freely and without fear of violent retaliation. These movements must also respect the equal citizenship of non-Muslim nationals of the state because that is the only possible basis of peace, political stability, and economic development at home, as well as acceptance by and cooperation with the international community abroad. On the second count, fundamentalists must accept the principles of the rule of law in international relations because that is also essential for peace, political stability, and economic development of their own country.

It would therefore seem clear that Islamic fundamentalism is unacceptable as a legitimate expression of the collective right of Muslims to self-determination because of the inherent inconsistency of its ideology with the conditions under which Islamic societies must exercise this right today, both within those societies and in their relations with the non-Muslim world. Regardless of the apparent appeal of fundamentalism to many Muslims today, it is clear that the internal and external context in which Islamic identity and self-determination can be realized is radically different from what it used to be in the precolonial era. A primary underlying cause of this transformation of local context in each case is that all Islamic societies are now constituted into nationstates, which are part of global political, economic, and security systems. They are all members of the United Nations and subject to international

law, including universal human rights standards. None of these states is religiously homogeneous, politically insulated, or economically independent from the non-Muslim world.

It is therefore clear that the right to self-determination cannot mean that Muslims are completely free to do as they please in their own country, let alone in relation to other countries, because their right to self-determination is limited by the rights of others. In other words, it is neither legally permissible nor practically viable for fundamentalists to force other citizens of the state (whether Muslim or non-Muslim) to accept and implement their view of Sharia as a matter of state policy. As I have argued elsewhere, the idea of an Islamic state is not only unprecedented in Islamic history but also morally and politically untenable, and practically unviable in the modern context (An-Na'im 1999). That is, in addition to the fact that the idea of an Islamic state, as presently advocated by fundamentalist movements, has no precedent in more than fifteen centuries of Islamic history, recent experience in countries like Iran, Pakistan, and Sudan illustrates that this idea is also practically unviable today. The idea is morally untenable because whatever views of Sharia are enforced by those who control the state will violate the freedom of religion of those Muslims who disagree with those views, as well as the human rights of women and non-Muslims (An-Na'im 1990).

Islamic fundamentalism is problematic for the thesis I am exploring in this chapter because of its violent intolerance of all differences, both within the same tradition and in relation to other religious and ideological perspectives. Movements that subscribe to this view tend to drastically repress internal dissent through intimidation and charges of heresy, which seriously inhibits any possibility of internal contestation of the exclusivity of their interpretation of Islam. The intolerance of Islamic fundamentalists of other religious communities and commitment to an expansive view of jihad not only obstructs the development of interreligious alliances in GCS but also constitutes a serious threat to international peace and security (An-Na'im 1988). As already emphasized, however, it is also part of the thesis of this chapter that religious traditions are open to change and transformation in favor of global solidarity for social justice.

The question is therefore how to achieve the necessary transformation within each religious tradition, Islam in this case, that would enable GCS to organize across religious and cultural divides to mobilize and pressure agents of economic globalization to integrate social justice concerns in their calculations. Such transformation obviously requires a combination of elements, including theological arguments about different interpretations of the religion in question and an appreciation of conditions under which some of them may prevail over others. This process is also affected by factors that facilitate free debate and dissent at home, and the rule of law in international relations abroad. As to be expected, these necessary conditions are neither completely

lacking nor sufficiently secured. For instance, while some Islamic countries are better than others in securing the necessary domestic conditions, it is clear that the "space" for free debate and dissent is seriously lacking in many of them. While the idea of GCS raises expectations of collaboration in promoting such conditions for favorable change, a positive role for religion in the democratization of Islamic societies does not appear to be supported by GCS because of the fear that, given the choice, Muslims will choose fundamentalist Islam. Ironically, this lack of support may turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy, whereby Islamic fundamentalism prevails because genuine and sustainable democratization is not given a chance.

Like other societies, moreover, Muslims tend to become defensive and conservative when they perceive themselves to be under attack, especially when they see that their personal safety and national sovereignty are not protected by international law. That is, Islamic fundamentalist notions of jihad are legitimized by the prevalence of similar notions of lawlessness and self-help by major powers. It is from this perspective that I believe that the manner and scale of the military retaliation by the United States against the terrorist attacks of September 11, in its unilateral use of force abroad and denial of due process of law for foreign captives, are tantamount to a fundamental repudiation of the premise of peaceful coexistence (An-Na'im 2002c). The proponents of jihad as aggressive war are more likely to gain legitimacy among the majority of Muslims in a world where military force and self-help prevail over the rule of law in international relations.

In my view, there is an alternative, more liberal, understanding of Islam that is capable of challenging the theological and ideological basis of Islamic fundamentalists and denying them the moral and political force of Islam in many parts of Africa and Asia. To speak of liberal Islam raises the question of whether it has to conform to a particular Western understanding of liberalism and secularism. An underlying tension regarding this question relates to the meaning of secularism and its implications for liberalism—that is, whether a commitment to liberalism would necessarily entail a commitment to a "secular" view of the relationship between religion and the state, and what that means in practice in different contexts. Another pertinent inquiry relates to the conditions that are likely to facilitate and promote the development of liberal Islam. For instance, what is the role of the nation-state and transnational movements in generating or sustaining liberal understandings of Islam in different parts of the world?

It is not possible to examine all these questions here, but a sampling of how they might be addressed may be helpful. For instance, there is a general aversion, at times even hostility, to secularism, which is seen as an anti-religious Western ideology. The Indonesian scholar Nurcholish Madjid calls for a revitalization and liberalization of Islamic thought and understanding through what he calls "secularization." He insists, however, that does not

mean the application of secularism, because "secularism" is the name for an ideology, a new closed worldview that functions very much like a new religion (Madjid 1998, 286). This common aversion to what is perceived to be a "Western-imposed conception of secularism" is probably due to associating it with colonialism and militant antireligious attitudes. To dispel this apprehension, secularism should be understood as a doctrine of public policy that is necessary for freedom of religion, rather than antagonistic to religion, as well as being indigenous to Islamic history, instead of being imposed by colonialism (An-Na'im 2001).

As a general principle, the separation of religion and the state simply means that the state should not impose one view of Islam that would deny Muslims themselves freedom of choice among competing interpretations of their religion that are all equally valid and legitimate (An-Na'im 1999). Keeping the state neutral regarding the wide variety of views about the position of Sharia on issues of public policy and law would enable Muslims to freely debate which view should prevail at any given point in time. Instead, state law of general application should be based on "public reason," that is, justifications that all citizens can share, reject, or accept without fear of charges of heresy or intercommunal hostility. In contrast, claiming that any proposed legislation becomes law *because* it is Sharia (the will of God) as such means that it is beyond criticism or amendment. Whatever the source, moreover, the policy and law enforced by the state must always respect the equal fundamental constitutional and human rights of the totality of the population, Muslims and non-Muslims, men and women.

This rehabilitation of secularism in modern contexts of Islamic societies is integral to conceptualizations of liberal Islam as an interpretive approach that contrasts the historical context of the original formulation of religious doctrine by early Muslim scholars with the modern context in which Islam is to be understood and applied today. In general, the proponents of this approach tend to distinguish between one aspect of Islam as a religion with its sacred, unchanging, eternally determined body of rules for believers, and another aspect that is capable of development and transformation through time. The need for reinterpretation requires the use of fresh and creative *ijtihad* (independent reasoning and interpretation of the scripture). The proponents of a liberal interpretation of Islam also hold that since the law must have the purpose of serving humankind, it must be adaptable to its needs (Dalacoura 1998, 63–64).

Although the terms in which the debate and discussion of Islamic liberal thought must be framed, as well as the content and tensions of that discussion, may be different from those of debates about liberalism in other parts of the world, such differences should not be exaggerated either. For example, Islamic liberal thought cannot assume or presuppose Western conceptions of secularism, the nation-state, or a well-organized and active civil society. But such

conceptions and institutions are evolving in different parts of the Muslim world, though necessarily in local terms, as should be expected. Moreover, since liberal Islam has to tackle these issues in the specific history and context of each Islamic society, one should expect of a wide diversity of perspectives on Islamic liberalism, reflecting such factors as the nature of the nation-state and the dynamics of its relationship with civil society (Hermassi 1995).

The tentative conclusion of this section is that religious traditions are constantly being contested by competing interpretations of the scripture in the specific context of each community of believers, which is more conducive for religious pluralism and interreligious consensus in some setting than in others. This raises the possibility of more inclusive conceptions of religion that can facilitate solidarity around shared concerns of different religious communities, as discussed in the final section of this chapter. I will now turn to a brief elaboration on the moral deficit of economic globalization that I am proposing can be redressed through an overlapping consensus among different religious traditions, as mediated by an emerging global civil society.

Morality of Globalization

The antecedents of what is presently known as globalization as a conduit of trade, culture, travel, economics, knowledge, science, and technology go back thousands of years in human history (Sen 2002, A2). What is new is a fundamental change in the scale, intensity, and speed of these processes due to enormous advances in the technology of travel and communication that have also had far-reaching social and political consequences. As indicated earlier, the problem with the economic dimensions of globalization is their indifference to the social consequences of this unrelenting drive for rapid growth and profits, at the cost of making the poor poorer, or at least denying them their fair share of the global economic pie (Sen 2002, A5). For example, in the midst of rising wealth generated through globalization, nearly a billion people struggle to live on less than one U.S. dollar a day, the same as in the mid-1980s (Oxfam 2002, 5). There is also a gross widening of the gap between the wealthy and the poor, even within the rich developed countries. For instance, the chief executive officers of American corporations were paid on average 458 times more than production workers in 2000, up from 104 times in 1991 (IFG 2002, 30).

These negative consequences of economic globalization are neither inevitable nor irreversible because the same processes have resulted in the rapid intensification of the integration of ideas, knowledge, norms, values, and consciousness that can be conducive to the promotion of social justice and universal human rights on a global scale. The possibility of using the same processes and dynamics of globalization to redress economic, social, and

political problems is critical for what I am referring to here as the "morality of globalization." Relevant questions in this regard include whether it is possible to transform the values underlying economic globalization to facilitate its becoming more morally responsible and responsiveness to human suffering everywhere. This in turn requires appreciation and engagement of ways to influence primary actors in the sphere of economic globalization.

The main entrepreneurs of economic globalization are major transnational corporations whose primary motivation is maximizing profits through free trade and corporate deregulation (IFG 2002, 20). As corporations become less regulated, it becomes very difficult for national governments to protect local jobs and resources or to influence how the market works. The same developments tend to favor a global monoculture to maximize potential markets and facilitate better production, more cost-effectiveness, and greater profit. But these features of economic globalization are challenged on the ground by competing ideas and values within and among different segments of society, as well as at the transnational and global level. Mediation among these competing values and interests requires a combination of the political dynamism of democratic governance and normative guidance of international human rights standards within the framework of a credible and legitimate international legal order. While democracy can facilitate the functioning of the market, it should also serve to correct the market's negative effect on social justice. However, democratic structures are unlikely to effectively regulate economic globalization without the support of agreed standards that are accepted as binding on the actors through appropriate institutions.

In principle, governments should be allowed to set policies on the development and welfare of their people, provided that they are politically and legally accountable to local and national constituencies. Both aspects of this proposition are integral to the international law principle and collective human right to self-determination, including the right to determine the terms under which governments enter into trade with others or invite others to invest in their economies (IFG 2002, 78). However, this principle and right will be totally subverted without effective transparency and accountability of governments to civil society. In other words, the legitimacy of economic globalization depends on the transparency of economic institutions and processes and their accessibility to civil society actors who can ensure their accountability to generally agreed objectives of social policy.

Economic globalization is also pushing toward privatization of elements that have always been out of the reach of the trading system. For instance, aspects of life that have been accepted as the collective and inalienable property of all peoples, the common heritage of humankind, are now being marketed as commodities in the global markets (IFG 2002, 22, 81). It is now possible to gain property rights to genetic structures of human life through rules on intellectual property. Lifesaving medication, healing herbs that have

been known and used by local communities since time immemorial, even lakes and streams, are being monopolized by corporations through patent laws, to be sold at prohibitively high prices. Patent holders have the right to exclude the whole world from making, duplicating, or selling what is deemed to be patented property, without regard to collective human investment in the development of these resources in the first place.

As new markets tend to reward existing markets that already have productive resources, such as land, financial and physical assets, and human capital, economic globalization offers a high return to countries that have stable political systems, secure property rights, and adequate human services because they are better able to cope with market changes. Conversely, countries stricken with poverty, unstable political systems, and insufficient human services are disadvantaged by increased globalization because they are unlikely to have the resources to protect themselves in ruthlessly "free markets." Global entrepreneurs are thereby enabled to withdraw their investment and transfer it elsewhere when an enterprise fails to maximize the return, even if it functions well in social terms.

The inability of poor countries to participate in economic globalization and all its devices—ironically because they lack the freedom to do so—has become the sure means of keeping most of the population of the world in bondage and captivity (Sen 1999, 7). The market values that are the driving force behind globalization should include mechanisms and processes for combating corruption and promoting trust in economic, social, or political relationships that enable all aspects of global society to flourish (Sen 1999, 9). Globalization must therefore be conceived to mandate the removal of major sources of restriction and limitation of freedom, such as poor economic opportunities, poverty, systematic social deprivation, and neglect of public facilities.

A possible and viable framework for this conception, I believe, is the universality of international standards of human rights, provided this paradigm is taken to include affirmative obligations of the state to promote social and economic rights, like the human rights to education and healthcare, as well as political and civil rights, such as the liberty to participate in public discussion and scrutiny (Sen 1999, 3). Article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 (UDHR) refers to the economic, social, and cultural rights as "indispensable for [one's] dignity and free development of [one's] personality" and to "the right to social security," which entitles everyone to access to welfare provisions (Eide 2003, 9). At the core of social rights is the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living, which requires, at a minimum, that everyone shall enjoy the necessary subsistence rights—adequate food and nutrition, clothing, housing, and the necessary conditions of care and health services. Closely related to these rights is the right of families (mothers and children) to special assistance.

The enjoyment of these social rights also requires certain *economic* rights, like the right to property, the right to work and other work-related rights, and the right to social security. Most of the people of the world ensure the livelihood of their families through work outside the formal sector (IFG 2002, 73). The majority of indigenous people work in areas that are not often integrated into the national or global market. Small-scale entrepreneurial activities and subsistence agriculture can be found in rural areas; these activities, however, often do not offer regular income. People living in the urban areas of poor countries sometimes have to survive without regular jobs or incomes. In most countries around the world, economic globalization is depriving greater numbers of people of the essential means of human dignity. The right to social security is essential when a person does not own sufficient property or is not able to secure an adequate standard of living through work, due to unemployment, old age, or disability (Eide 2003, 10).

Education is both a social and a cultural right. The right to education obligates states to develop and maintain a system of schools and other educational institutions to provide education to everybody—free of charge, if possible. The obligations of states to promote equality of opportunity and treatment in education are laid down in greater detail in the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education of 1960 (Eide 2003, 10). Since it enhances the human capital of society at large, education is one of the few human rights where the individual has a corresponding duty to exercise the right.

Moreover, there is clear interdependence between such economic and social rights, on the one hand, and what is commonly known as civil and political rights, on the other, such as freedom of opinion, expression, and association; protection against arbitrary arrest or detention; equality before the law; and the right to effective remedy for any violation of one's rights. For example, freedom of association is an enabling right that facilitates the development and realignment of power and the space for other elements of civil society. This includes the right to form and participate in trade unions without state interference. Freedom of association allows local communities to be empowered through bargaining and choice, to participate in economic activities that enhance their political power and ability to pursue effective remedies for the violation of their rights (Eide 2003, 10). This human right enables workers to challenge unjust and discriminatory practices such as the failure of employers to provide equal pay for equal work, as happens routinely to women around the world.

For our purposes here, civil and political rights are particularly important for enabling one to effectively participate in the political process of electing government and holding it accountable for its policies. This would enable disadvantaged segments of the population to have a voice in the direction of their country's social and economic development, including such matters as increasing the minimum wage, protecting union activists from retaliation,

enforcing prohibitions on discrimination, regulating industries, or ensuring that investments are made with social values in mind. But the practical utility of such civil and political rights can be seriously diminished by the policies of liberalization and withdrawal of subsidies, which are the conditions imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. In curtailing the ability of the state to determine its own economic and social policies in this way, these global actors tend to undermine the relevance and efficacy of democratic and constitutional governance in developing countries. Thus, the populations of developing countries are struggling for constitutionalism and democratic governance at a time when the state they seek to control and hold accountable is losing control over its own economic and social policies.

This is particularly serious because, as noted earlier, when religious communities feel threatened by external forces, like economic globalization, they are likely to drift into fundamentalism as an apparently easy and categorical answer to all their problems. As is to be expected, fundamentalists take advantage of the situation to dominate public discourse and eventually control the state. A frequent response from those threatened by the rise of religious fundamentalism, whether ruling elites or liberal intellectuals, is to insist that religion must be relegated to the purely private domain, thereby denying it a role in promoting the social responsibility of economic actors.

The tentative conclusion of this section is that the human rights paradigm seems to offer the possibility of a comprehensive and systematic response to the challenges of economic globalization. In terms of the thesis of this chapter, this paradigm is a good candidate for being the basis of the sort of interreligious solidarity and consensus that is needed for infusing moral values into the processes of economic globalization in the interest of social justice. Although there are good reasons for viewing the process of globalization with apprehension, it clearly has many potentially positive aspects if it is pursued for the common good, not just for the benefit of a few. Globalization has opened up profound possibilities for human development and enhanced the quality of life for many people around the world. Information technology has collapsed time and space for far-off events, making them easily accessible to people everywhere and promoting the exchange of ideas and customs between peoples of different countries. Live communications enable people to instantaneously participate in the historical development of different societies and to create and promote global concern over social concerns, human security, and environmental issues. Ways of thinking and behaving are now challenged beyond accepted traditional patterns, thereby enhancing possibilities of solidarity across political, social, cultural, and religious boundaries. These aspects of globalization can be particularly helpful in creating and sustaining interreligious understanding, solidarity, and consensus-building. They can also facilitate the development of a global civil society and enable it to more effectively mediate the excesses of economic globalization.

Global Civil Society and Human Rights

The question here is whether there is, or can be, a GCS with such a degree of consensus and solidarity among groups with similar or shared concerns that enables it to act collectively in moderating the exclusivity of religion and excesses of economic globalization. Relevant questions include whether local civil society, *as it exists on the ground* in different parts of the world, is organized and motivated in ways that facilitate or hinder the sort of consensus and solidarity that promote and sustain GSC as envisioned here. Assuming or to the extent that is the case, how do differentials in power relations among various actors in GCS affect the agenda, strategies, and outcomes of their solidarity? In relation to the subject of this chapter in particular, for millions of people around the world, social, political, and cultural issues are inextricably tied to perceptions of religious identity in local context, as well as religious rationale of social institutions and behavior. Questions raised by this focus include how to account for that dimension of religion in the lives of individuals and communities in theorizing about economics, development, nationalism, and the nature and dynamics of the public sphere where GCS is supposed to operate. Indeed, are different religious conceptions or formations of local civil society compatible with any uniform understanding of a global civil society?

The term "civil society" can be understood as signifying particular types of social processes that relate to an intermediary participatory realm between the private and the public sphere, a network of institutions mediating between an administrative source of power and the political-social actions and practices of peoples. "*Civil Society is not a thing*, but a set of conditions within which individuals interact collectively with the state" (Gupta 2000, 159, emphasis in original). As such, civil society can be found to *exist, in and of itself*, throughout the world, and not only in Western or developed, stable countries. Thus, we are concerned here with the nature and dynamics of the social processes and intermediary participatory realm that signify "civil society," whatever that may be in each setting. In other words, it is a matter of whether one is looking for the concept in one place as it has been conceived in another, or in terms of the place where one is looking. That is, civil society needs to draw "upon available and still surviving traditions of togetherness, mutuality and resolution of differences and conflict—in short, traditions of a democratic collective that are our own and what we need to build in a changed historical context" (Kothari 1989, 29).

But how does this view of civil society deal with the question of which normative content the concept should have for it to be a useful medium of analysis or comparison? That is, does opening the concept to different possibilities of meaning than what it has in its so-called countries of origin raise

the risk of rendering it meaningless? If whatever "intermediary participatory realm between the private and the public sphere" happens to be on the ground would qualify as "civil society," the term would be meaningless. But if some social processes qualify as civil society and others do not, the question becomes, what is the difference between the two types of intermediary realm? In other words, how do the descriptive and prescriptive aspects of any definition of civil society operate in relation to each other? How can the realities of civil society on the ground be reconciled with what they ought to be for the institution to serve its purposes?

Some scholars define civil society in terms of civility, associability, and citizenship, understood as follows. Civility is tolerance of the other so that groups and individuals with very different ideas can live together in peace, working within a representative and participant system for their individual goals. Associability is a spirit of cooperation for citizens to peacefully and openly organize around political issues, professions, or any common interest. Citizenship is a crucial component that underpins civil society (Schwedler 1995, 10–11). While these ideas are certainly critical, I believe that each of these terms can take on a range of meanings that cannot be separated and distilled from the contexts in which they are lived and practiced. For instance, instead of limiting the definition of "civility" to what has been elucidated in the tradition of Western liberal political thought, the term should also include other notions about civic association that exist in other cultural traditions.

For the purposes of this chapter in particular, a central question is, how can religion provide a basis for these normative components in many regions and cultures of the world? In response, I would first question the underlying dichotomy between religious and secular conceptions of the self in discourse on civil society in this context. The issue is not whether there can be a "religious civil society" as opposed to a "secular civil society," for that merely reproduces the dichotomy. Rather, it is how to develop a normative definition of civil society with due regard to an understanding of religion, without forfeiting the normative premise of civil society. Since religion is a necessary form of associational life for most people around the world, it is imperative to include it in any understanding of the normative elements of civil society.

Indeed, where it provides the basis for a powerful critique of those aspects of the state that are inimical to civil society, religion may provide the impetus that civil society needs. Thus, for instance, Islam was the most feasible and practical ideology and language available to Iranians in the 1970s. It was a rallying point for the political aim of ridding themselves of the Shah and American hegemony, since "In uniting under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomaini and the progressive ideology of Ali Shariati, Iranians were taking self-assertive, constructive steps forward to deal with the political realities of today's world. . . . [Islam] was the more effective as a revolutionary ideology and ethos because it does not recognize a distinction between political and

religious effort, nor does it regard politics as outside the realm of religious concern" (Hegland 1987, 194). For Iran itself and other situations like those in Pakistan and Sudan, however, carrying that motivating link between religion and politics into a formal and institutional unification of religion and the state has been profoundly problematic for any coherent sense of civil society.

Thus, assuming that one accepts the need to incorporate the role of religion in different societies into conceptions of GCS, the next question is, how can that be done in ways that are consistent with the nature and dynamics of both sides of this process? That is, how can religion be included without comprising the authenticity of religious experience, on the one hand, or undermining the core meaning and function of global civil society, on the other? While each society must struggle with these issues on its own terms and in its specific context, as suggested earlier, there is need for an overarching framework that can facilitate the necessary process of internal transformation within each religious tradition, as well as the sort of transreligious consensus and solidarity that are necessary for GCS to emerge and operate effectively.

In my view, the human rights paradigm, as explained briefly earlier, provides the means for such consensus and solidarity to materialize, as well as the normative content of social justice and individual freedom that GCS should strive for. But the human rights paradigm itself is constantly being challenged as a form of "cultural imperialism" that is seeking to impose Western values on other societies and undermined by charges of practical inefficacy and irrelevance. The first issue relates to the universality of the human rights, while the second refers to their realistic efficacy on the ground.

As I have argued elsewhere (An-Na'im 1992), the universality of human rights has to be constructed through an internal discourse within and among different cultural and religious traditions, rather than simply proclaimed through international declarations and treaties. The objective of internal discourse is to transform people's attitudes in favor of acceptance of diversity of perspectives within and among traditions, and the deliberate promotion of cross-cultural consensus and solidarity on universal values. The fact that this process is taking place in one setting can be cited by the proponents of the universality of human rights in another setting to enhance the legitimacy and efficacy of the process in their own situation. Thus, it would enhance the credibility and efficacy of Muslim advocates of the universality of human rights to be able point to such efforts taking place in European and North American settings. Conversely, Muslim advocates may be dismissed are romantic fools, if not agents of hostile foreign powers, if they are unable to point to similar efforts by other advocates in their respective situations.

Moreover, there is synergy between the theoretical legitimacy and practical efficacy of human rights standards, whereby each side of this formula influences the other, whether positively or negatively. Thus, successful internal discourse and cross-cultural dialogue in favor of the universality of

human rights would lead to greater commitment to the practical implementation of these rights, which will in turn promote the local legitimacy of human rights. That is, as human rights norms become better observed in practice as a product of the indigenous values and policy objectives of each society, the practical relevance and efficacy of these norms will be enhanced, thereby leading to more observance, and so forth. The reverse is also probably true: the lack or failure of internal discourse and cross-cultural dialogue means less commitment to the practical implementation of human rights norms, which will then be taken as evidence of their inefficacy and irrelevance. That perception may then reinforce earlier negative attitudes about the whole paradigm and therefore diminish political commitment to their implementation (An-Na'im 1997a).

In this light, human rights norms can be an effective framework for challenging the negative consequences of economic globalization to the extent that they are accepted by different societies as culturally legitimate, as well as practically effective in achieving that objective. Yet these norms are unlikely to be accepted and implemented unless they do deliver on their promise. The way out of this apparent paradox, I suggest, is to see the process as an incremental synergy of cultural legitimacy and practical efficacy in the following logical sequence: the negative social and human consequences of economic globalization can lead to calls for a global framework and strategy to mobilize the political will to redress those problems. Taking the human rights paradigm as a possible candidate for that role, local actors can then seek to promote the legitimacy of these rights. As they are able to point to the ways in which this paradigm can in effect redress the problems of economic globalization, its practical implementation will begin to increase, thereby initiating the synergy between theory and practice envisaged here.

Since this process has to be undertaken by human actors, as indicated by my emphasis on the role of human agency at the beginning of this chapter, the question becomes how to motivate people to act in this way and encourage their communities to give this approach a chance. Thus, in accordance with the thesis of this chapter, GCS can be the medium for this process, and religion can play a critical role in motivating and mobilizing people in this direction. At the same time, the technical and material benefits of globalization can facilitate the development of interreligious and transcultural consensus and solidarity in support of human rights as a framework for redressing the negative consequences of economic globalization.

Possibilities of Mediation

To illustrate the proposition that religion can enable GCS actors to bring moral constraints to bear on purely economic globalization in the interest of

social justice, I will review in this final section the experience of liberation theology in Latin America as an example of efforts to infuse moral values into economic globalization.

Liberation theology is best known for its Latin American experience, where it emerged around 1968–71 as a radical religiously motivated challenge to oppressive structures in various parts of the continent (MacLean 1999, 123; Turner 1994, 3, 9). To its founders, the fundamental tenets of liberation theology combined the love of God with the urgency of solidarity with the poor (Gutiérrez 1999, 27) and emphasized human agency in taking direct action to help the poor. The movement used Marxist ideology in pursuit of a socialist system for sharing wealth (Fitzgerald 1999, 229; Turner 1999, 4). Its ideology is based on the assumption that oppressed peoples and classes are fundamentally in conflict with the wealthy nations and oppressive classes (Gutiérrez 1973, 36). Subsequent developments sought to expand the scope of the movement in the 1980s and 1990s to include race, gender, culture, and ecological issues (Turner 1994, 5; Tombs 2001, 46–48), though it remained primarily an ecclesiastic movement with a focus on the liberation of the poor (Berryman 1987, 157; Duque 1995, 54).

While the movement was by no means uniform, its various currents shared the same three assumptions: that the majority of individuals live in a state of underdevelopment and unjust dependence, that this state is sinful as viewed by Christian terms, and that it is the responsibility of the members of the church to work to overcome this sinful state (Galilea 1979, 167). The same fundamental theme was defined by Gutiérrez (1999, 27) in terms of "solidarity with the poor and rejection of poverty as something contrary to the will of God." This fundamental underlying theme of the whole movement was linked to the work of grassroots Christian communities and the evangelical mission of the church (Gutiérrez 1999, 19).

In a paradigm shift from classical doctrine, liberation theology focused on putting God's will into practice in solidarity with the poor, in contrast to the "detachment and reflection" of traditional theology (Gutiérrez 1999, 28–29; Rowland 1999, 4). The movement also preferred social science analysis over the philosophical reflection of classical theology in its effort to link action with thinking (Richard 1991, 2; Williams 1998, 199). Leading theologians of the movement also stressed the importance of the communitarian experience as essential to liberation practice and saw that methodology as manifest in spirituality and in one's life as a Christian. Liberation theologians distinguished between material poverty, as "the lack of economic goods necessary for a human life worthy of the name," and spiritual poverty, as "an interior attitude of unattachment to the goods of this world" (Gutiérrez 1973, 204). They also maintained that, from a Christian perspective, poverty is contrary to human dignity and against the will of God (Gutiérrez 1973, 291).

Applying its social science approach, liberation theology viewed the cause of poverty in Latin America as inequality in the system of power and ownership that inhibits access of the masses to participation in society (Boff 1979, 129). Instead of the prevalent view that third world countries only need to "catch up" with developed industrialized countries, liberation theologians argue that massive poverty is "the result of *structures of exploitation and domination*; it derives from centuries of *colonial domination* and is reinforced by the present international *economic system*" (Dussel 1984, 89, emphasis in original).

However, the movement always had an ambivalent relationship with the Vatican. The Vatican's response has been consistently wary of the political role of liberation theology, especially its use of Marxism as a tool of social analysis, while at the same time apparently supporting the movement's agenda of social justice. To the Vatican, liberation theology's advocacy of an alternative church (the *iglesia popular*) was an affront to the official church (Gibelleni 1988, 46). Leading liberation theologians like Gutiérrez and Boff continued to insist that Marxism is used only as a conduit to understanding societal forms of oppression. But the Vatican and other critics held that Marxism cannot be used for empirical analysis without regard for its critique of religion itself (Turner 1999, 203).

Liberation theology continues to be practiced at the grassroots level, and those who spearheaded efforts to further the movement during its inception continue to be prolific in their writings. However, new strains have emerged, and although the underlying theme remains liberation from oppression, diverse perspectives within the movement have their own strong new agendas. Liberation theology has also lost large numbers of supporters due to changes in political, social, and religious circumstances throughout Latin America. Commentators mention several factors as contributing to the decline of liberation theology in recent years, such as the failure of Marxism, conflict with the Vatican, and the rise of Pentecostalism. Adding issues of race, gender, culture, and sexuality, as well indigenous people's and ecological concerns, to its agenda is necessary for the movement's relevance but also diminishes the clarity of its original focus (Tombs 2001, 53–56). Another factor in the decline of the movement is the rise of Pentecostal churches that are posing a serious challenge to Catholicism as the underlying doctrine of liberation theology (Tombs 2001, 55). The focus of liberation theology on a purely socioeconomic analysis of conflict without addressing the dynamics of culture and religion may have contributed to Latin Americans turning to other religious movements (Moltman 1998, 74). Recent more sustainable and thoroughgoing democratization in the main Latin American countries where liberation theology had its strongest following may have also diminished the need for this particular avenue of political resistance and economic protest.

On the other hand, the strong focus on poverty and development linked liberation theology to other intellectual and political currents in the region, as well as to global trends. For example, Paulo Freire criticized the churches for failing to exercise the true prophetic function and called on them to take sides in struggles for political liberation, or they will end up supporting repressive regimes. Freire also sees a relationship between black theology and Latin American liberation theology in that both have a political nature, aligned with the struggle of the oppressed, and emphasize revolutionary praxis (Elias 1994, 145). Black North American liberation theology parallels liberation theology in that its leaders also deviated from the traditional theological paradigm.

Other parallel Christian theological trends in Africa, in Asia, and among feminists have also emerged as reactions against the European and North American theological establishment that tended to assume that its theology was the only model of "Christian" theology. Each of these emerging theologies has its own focus and priorities, which do not necessarily coincide with those of Latin American liberation theology. African theology, for instance, tends to focus on the problem of "indigenisation and the role of native African religions" (Ferm 1992, 3). While each strain of theology is uniquely suited for its context, they are all linked by the preferential option for the poor. Dialogue between Latin American liberation theologians and feminist theologians has taken place mostly in the context of international ecumenical conferences, but that has been rare, superficial, and cautious (Vuola 1997).

I am not in a position to assess the scale and scope of the success and failures of liberation theology or to predict its future prospects in Latin America or elsewhere. All I am suggesting here is that it seems to have been (and may continue to be) a good example of a religious challenge to the negative consequences of economic globalization, especially in its local and national manifestations. However, the main question for the thesis of this chapter is whether the highly contextual nature of this Christian liberation theology and similar trends in other religious traditions, like liberal Islam or Gandhian Hinduism, would permit the forging of transreligious consensus and solidarity of GCS. The main challenge here, as explained earlier, is how to transcend the exclusivity of religious traditions to subscribe to a shared normative content and collaborative strategies in infusing moral constraints on economic globalization. In particular, are such diverse religious movements likely to agree on the universality of human rights as an overarching framework for infusing moral values into the institutions and processes of economic globalization in the interest of social justice?

I believe that this is possible through the processes of internal discourse and cross-cultural dialogue, as explained earlier. The idea of overlapping consensus requires unity of purpose and mutual respect for difference, not ideological and associational uniformity. But this consensus-building must also take account of the unevenness of political and institutional power relations between different

regions of the world. The process of inclusion and incorporation of local or regional participants, like liberal Islam and liberation theology, should also be sensitive to the risks of serious cross-cultural misunderstandings, which can be compounded by religious and cultural normative differences among all participants in GCS.

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