



10-1-1988

### Globalization and Islamic Resurgence

Jeffrey A. Shad Jr.  
*University of Pittspurgh*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr>

#### Recommended Citation

Shad, Jeffrey A. Jr. (1988) "Globalization and Islamic Resurgence," *Comparative Civilizations Review*. Vol. 19 : No. 19 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr/vol19/iss19/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Comparative Civilizations Review* by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact [scholarsarchive@byu.edu](mailto:scholarsarchive@byu.edu), [ellen\\_amatangelo@byu.edu](mailto:ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu).

## GLOBALIZATION AND ISLAMIC RESURGENCE

JEFFREY A. SHAD, JR.

My paper addresses the issue of whether it is possible for civilizations, such as the Islamic, to retain their distinctiveness while, at the same time, being functional members of the world-system. Vytautas Kavolis (1987) argues that globalization theory ultimately does away with distinctions between civilizations and the "globe." His claim is borne out by David Wilkinson's (1987) argument that there presently exists a single global civilization. Roland Robertson, however, disagrees with Kavolis. He maintains that "globalization involves the universalization of particularism, not just the particularization of universalism" (1987a:21). Civilizations, for Robertson, assert their particularity when they address the universal thematization of "humanity." I agree with Robertson that civilizations can remain unique within the context of globality, but I disagree that this is made possible by the globalization of humanity. I submit that as long as civilizations adapt to the production imperatives of the world-system they can assert their distinctiveness by rejecting its humanistic socialization imperatives.

### *Globality, Morality, and Mythology*

Contemporary worldwide religious resurgence, or what is sometimes referred to as "the return of the sacred," has been interpreted within the context of globalization theory (as formulated by Roland Robertson, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1987, 1987a, Robertson and Chirico, 1985; Robertson and Lechner, 1985) as being a response to the perception of the world as "a single place." According to Robertson (1983:205), as the world comes to be

I am indebted to Vytautas Kavolis, Roland Robertson, and Daniel Regan for their constructive comments on earlier versions of this paper.

perceived as a single place its functional imperatives constrain the operation of societies to regenerate themselves in reference to the global-human condition. The emerging awareness of the global-human condition, or the "baring" of a particular aspect of the "world," produces attempts to infuse it with meaning (Robertson, 1985:356). Such efforts to "enchant" the world are carried out by both the secular state and organized religion, thus setting the scene for the modern conflict between state and church over which has final authority to define the nature of the global-human condition (Robertson, 1987:46). State and church both seek to "clothe" stark humanity with teleological threads.

Recently, Vytautas Kavolis (1987:10) has argued that Robertson fails to take into account the significance of disparate civilizational traditions as mediators between social institutions such as the state and the church and their respective perceptions of global-humanity. Social institutions are not "blank states" when it comes to defining "the ends of man," but are filled with the inscriptions of age-old civilizational traditions that have spoken in the past, and continue to speak in the present, to questions concerning the meaning of man. Globalization theory does allow for differentiated responses to globality by different societies, but, cautions Kavolis, "it also postulates a Durkheimian inevitability of moving, sooner or later, toward a universal value hierarchy in which the idea of humanity as a whole subsumes these locally differentiated responses" (Kavolis, 1987:10). This is troublesome for Kavolis because, in his view, "little effort has been made to relate the type of response to globalization most likely to be generated by a particular people to either the enduring qualities of their civilization or to the trajectories of their histories" (Kavolis, 1987:17).

Kavolis' concern for the integrity of particularistic responses to the universal human condition is manifest in his argument that civilizations respond differently to the global-human condition depending on whether they focus on the "meaning" or the "man" aspects of the meaning of man (Kavolis, forthcoming). Globalization, says Kavolis, promotes the testing by the general public, now a worldwide audience, of the views and practices of each culture's standards of moral evaluation, a process he refers to as "the humanization of morality"—i.e. the judging of moral principles solely in terms of reducing human suffering or enhancing non-

destructive human potentialities. But man cannot live by practical guidance alone; he also needs mythology (or religion) to provide his life with spiritual meaning. This need for meaning is fulfilled, for Kavolis, if a civilization is "grounded in a particularity" (i.e. "the unity of what matters" or the sacred defined as "that which is respected for its own value"). The need is exacerbated by the global, moralistic tolerance of a plurality of competing meanings (i.e. "the comprehensiveness of what means" or cultural signifiers of the sacred) which are not taken seriously by moralists who advocate the secular (or profane) exploitation of anything that can be used for individual or collective human welfare.

Thus, there are, in Kavolis' perspective, at least two basic cultural orientations to the globe, the moralistic and the mythological; and morality and mythology will, predicts Kavolis, fight the central cultural battles of the future. Kavolis contrasts Western and Islamic civilizations on this score, as the main contenders for supremacy in the struggle between morality and mythology.

Western civilization is said by Kavolis to be the central moralizing force of the world, and treats religion (i.e. the unity of what is signified by all cultural meanings) as the "englobed" and culture (i.e. the sum total of everything that is symbolically comprehended by human beings) as the "englobing" due to its liberal respect for all mythologies so long as they do not interfere seriously with humanistic morality. This is the basis for the Western crisis of a lack of grounding among the world's melee of meanings. Islamic civilization (in its revitalized form), on the other hand, is described by Kavolis as the world's leading mythologizer, and treats religion as the englobing and culture as the englobed. Revitalized Islamic civilization is grounded in the totality of what it holds to be sacred, but precisely because of this grounding Islam must shun, and be shunned by, a global order based on respect for all meanings and the primacy of morality over mythology (Kavolis, forthcoming). Globalization produces a spiritual hunger for meaning, but meaning challenges the moral foundation of the globe.

My main question for Kavolis is: How can the world be globally integrated as a single place if civilizations are excluded from full participation in global affairs because they have achieved the grounding in a particularity required by the very nature of global-

ity? Furthermore: Is it true that a mythologizing civilizational tradition such as Islam cannot be a functionally integrated member of a global order that places morality above religion?

### *Civility and Civilizations*

Certainly, the moralistic foundation of the global order puts limitations on what aspects of any given civilizational tradition can find legitimate expression. All civilizations, I contend, carry within themselves a certain hubris which, if it were too sharply expressed, would inhibit their participation in "civil" global interactions. This hubris may in fact be linked to deeply held religious sensibilities that form the core of a civilization's grounding in a particularity. In this sense there may be a conflict on the plane of civilizational interaction between intra-civilizational religion and inter-civilizational civility.

Civility, as John Murray Cuddihy defines it, is "the very medium of Western social interaction"; it comprises the norms of polite conduct that facilitate interaction between strangers in the modern world (Cuddihy, 1987:12-14). This meaning of civility is close to what Kavolis calls "semiotic universalism," i.e. "recognition of the right to independent existence of all sorts and varieties of cultures" (Kavolis, 1987:9). I would argue that in the capitalist world-system (Wallerstein, 1974, 1974a), civility is essential for the maintenance of cooperative relationships between societies that, in many respects, remain strangers to one another. At the same time, civility may, to the extent that it entails "the concealment of all unseemly depths" (Cuddihy, 1987:13), constitute the most significant impediment to the free expression of the "deep structures" of civilizations in the modern global world.

### *The Functional Imperatives of the World-System*

Civility is, in my opinion, the fulcrum of the "action system" of the global world—the functional imperatives of which may be said to correspond to the functional imperatives of the social system as formulated by Talcott Parsons (1965:30-79). Civility, I believe, does not, on the global scale, fulfill any one of the functional imperatives of Parsons' L I G A scheme, but rather is a sort of pre-condition for the maintenance of all of them.

Parsons' formulation of the functional imperatives of the social system is as follows: the function of adaptation to the environment for the purpose of attaining goals is served by the economy, while the function of determining goal states is fulfilled by the polity (Parsons and Smelser, 1956:51-70). The pattern-maintenance and integration functions are satisfied, respectfully, by cultural norms that stabilize the system in the face of pressures to overturn institutionalized values, and by forms of social organization that maintain solidarity among interacting individuals (Parsons and Smelser, 1956:13-29). According to Jürgen Habermas' interpretation of Parsons' scheme, the adaptive and goal-attainment functions together comprise the production imperatives of the social system, while the functions of pattern-maintenance and integration constitute the socialization imperatives of the social system (Habermas, 1975:1-17).

My formulation of the functional imperatives of the world-system may be summarized as follows: Wallerstein (1974, 1974a) clearly establishes that the adaptive function is met by *capitalism* (which is true even among "socialist" states that sell for profit in the international market [Wolterstorff, 1983:29]), while John Meyer (1980) may be cited to put forth the *nation-state* as the sustainer of the goal-attainment function. Robertson can be read to maintain that the integrative function is carried out by the thematization of *humanity*, and modernization theorists, such as Eisenstadt (1963, 1966) and Parsons (1966, 1971), may be referred to in support of the claim that the Western ideology of *progress* serves the pattern-maintenance function. My scheme is depicted in Figure 1.

#### *Legitimation of the World-System*

Deriving the functional imperatives of the world-system from Parsons' outline of the functional imperatives of the social system

Figure 1. Functional Imperatives of the World-System

<i>Production</i>	<i>Adaptation</i> Capitalism	<i>Goal-Attainment</i> Nation-state
<i>Socialization</i>	<i>Integration</i> Humanity	<i>Pattern-Maintenance</i> Progress

may be surprising since Parsons has long been regarded as a major proponent of modernization theory, which is challenged by world-system theory (Wolterstorff, 1983:24-26). While modernization theorists view the world as containing distinct societies at various stages of development, world-system theorists contend that the world itself comprises a single society or system. According to Nicholas Wolterstorff, the two major tenets of modernization theory are that it is in principle possible for all societies simultaneously to reach a high level of modernization without any structural alteration in the already established, highly modernized societies, and that the causes of a given society's low level of progress toward modernization are to be found in the failings of that society itself and not in the detrimental impact of the highly modernized societies upon it. World-system theory, on the other hand, holds that the underdevelopment of exploited societies cannot be explained without taking into account the relationships between core and peripheral societies (Wolterstorff, 1983:24-26). It is in connection with the relationships between core and peripheral areas in the world-system that the question of the system's legitimation must be addressed.

Habermas writes that the production imperatives of social systems "extract natural resources and transform the energies set free into use values," and that they help social systems "adapt outer nature to society." The socialization imperatives, on the other hand, "shape the members of the system into subjects capable of speaking and acting," they enable social systems to "adapt inner nature to society." Social systems sustain themselves in relation to outer nature through instrumental actions (i.e. according to technical rules), and in relation to inner nature through communicative actions (i.e. according to valid norms). While technical rules that allow social systems to control outer nature are empirically verifiable, the valid norms that enable social systems to accomplish the socialization of inner nature "have need of justification" (Habermas, 1975:9-10). In capitalist societies the problem of justifying the norms that regulate class exploitation has, since the advent of classical liberal economics, been solved by blaming inequities of economic distribution on the "free" competition of the open market, but with the rise of state-regulated capitalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the market can no longer be described as a natural, self-

regulating entity, and inequities of economic distribution cannot be blamed on the fair results of free competition. It is in this sense that Habermas speaks of the "legitimation crisis" of advanced capitalism (Habermas, 1975:33-94).

By extension of Habermas' argument, the legitimation crisis of the capitalist world-system may be said to involve how the core capitalist nations legitimate their exploitation of the semi-peripheral and peripheral areas which clearly cannot compete on an equal footing with them due to their comparative underdevelopment. Wallerstein, however, explicitly rejects any consideration of how the core legitimates its exploitation of the periphery because in his opinion the term "legitimation" "has been used to imply that the lower strata of a system feel some affinity with or loyalty towards the rulers, and I doubt that this has ever been a significant factor in the survival of world-systems" (Wallerstein, 1974a:404). In his assessment of how the world-system has retained relative political stability, Wallerstein takes into account essentially material factors such as the military strength of the core nations; a commitment among the elites of core countries to the ideology of the world-system because it advances their own self-interests; and the playing-off of the semi-periphery against the periphery which prevents them from uniting in opposition to the core (Wallerstein, 1974a:404-405).

More recently, however, Wallerstein has emphasized that the problem of the continuation of capitalism, when its internal contradictions should have already brought about its demise, must be treated as a normative problem concerning how it is that underdeveloped countries have internalized "the metaphysical presuppositions" of the world-system. These presuppositions, according to Wallerstein, are grounded in a "Newtonian world-view" in which states are seen as relatively autonomous structures and political power is thought to be located primarily in state-machineries. Anti-systemic movements, in this perspective, are duped into trying to gain control of state-machineries when real power, in fact, lies in the control of economic and cultural institutions that have the ability to seriously disrupt the functioning of the world-system (Wallerstein, 1983:25-36).

It is in relation to the metaphysical presuppositions of the world-system that the problem of its legitimation should be addressed. According to Meyer, in the modern world polity nation-



states have assumed the power to define and control economic value, and those values of the world polity whose local prices are defined by nation-states are legitimated at the expense of the delegitimation of the world exchange economy. The world polity is legitimated, in Meyer's view, largely as a result of "the cultural labors" of the elites of the world polity who fuel "a rise in the depiction of the natural order as infused with meanings that impose or require limitations on human society" (Meyer, 1980:132). The central thrust of these limitations pertains to the dangers of unregulated economic exchange during a time when human beings must make collective efforts to confront crises of global proportion (Meyer, 1980:133-134).

Meyer's argument, I believe, supports my contention that the legitimation of the world-system is closely bound up with debates of a "religious" nature about what Parsons (1978:352-433) has referred to as telic matters dealing with "the ends of man." Robertson and Chirico (1985) maintain that such debates have crystallized on a global scale due to the worldwide thematization of humanity. But Kavolis' recent work suggests that civilizations can have either mythological or moralistic approaches to evaluating the ends of man. The Western, moralistic approach upholds the secular ideology of progress and believes in the unconditional reduction of unnecessary human suffering and the enhancement of non-destructive human potentialities. It is this humanistic morality that, I contend, legitimates the functioning of the world-system.

But must this legitimating ideology be accepted, as a requisite of participation in the world-system, by a mythologizing civilizational tradition such as Islam which, as Kavolis indicates, asserts its own unique respect for the sacred against the Western thematization of humanity?

#### *Islam in the World-System*

My argument is that to the extent that Islam does not buy into the humanized morality of the world-system it is not integrated into the system's socialization imperatives. But the socialization imperatives are only two of the four functional imperatives of the world-system. It seems to me that Islam has so far succeeded in rejecting the socialization imperatives of the world-system while

at the same time adapting to the requirements of the production imperatives of capitalism and the nation-state, and has therefore managed to function "in the world" while not being "of the world."

Two works supporting the claim that Islam is not antithetical to capitalism are by Maxime Rodinson (1973) and Muhammad Abdul-Rauf (1984). Rodinson asserts that there is nothing in the Koran that prohibits the private ownership of property or free trade, and that, quite to the contrary, some Koranic verses condone the merchant's way of life (1973:13-16). In addition, Rodinson demonstrates that capitalist sectors have always existed in Islamic countries and are becoming more significant today (1973:118-184). Abdul-Rauf makes the point that Islam favors free markets, free enterprise, and an economy that is privately owned, although Islam also enforces the zakat, prohibits usury, and believes that men must financially support their wives and families (1984:61).

As for the nation-state, James Piscatori (1986) and John Esposito (1987) both make strong arguments supporting the view that this form of government is easily amenable to Islamic doctrine. Esposito points out that Turkey has moved the farthest in the direction of the nation-state, while Saudi Arabia and Pakistan still uphold the primacy of Islamic law in government, but most Islamic countries, such as Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Syria, Iran, Jordan, and Malaysia incorporate certain Islamic constitutional provisions, like requiring the head of state to be a Muslim or declaring Islam the state religion and the Shari'a the source of state law, into Western forms of constitutional government (1987:94-151).

Piscatori notes that Islam is usually thought to uphold the community of believers over the "lively multiplicity of political authorities," but Islam actually recognizes two kinds of political unities, the community of mankind and the community of believers, with the latter usually conceived of as the prototype of the former. Piscatori thinks that this distinction implies recognition of the non-universality of the Islamic community, and thus of ideological and political divisions (1986:42-46). Piscatori also observes that Muslims have a long history of dealing pragmatically with non-believers, such as honoring treaties, tolerating foreign delegations, recognizing international law, etc. (1986:45-46).

That Islam rejects the Western ideology of progress is affirmed by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1987). Nasr notes that there is no word for utopia in Arabic or Persian because Muslims believe that paradise exists only in heaven. This is reflected in the Islamic conception of time which, according to Nasr, is not linear, as in the West but "based essentially upon the cyclic rejuvenation of human history through the appearance of various prophets and ending finally in the eschatological events identified with the appearance of the Māhdi" (1987:116). "This," says Nasr, "reestablishes harmony and peace in the world through direct Divine intervention and not through the secular changes brought about by means of mere human agency" (1987:116).

The Islamic opposition to Western morality has already been discussed. I am in no way claiming that Islam has no compassion for humanity. This would be absurd. A. K. Brohi, for example, writes of himself and his fellow Muslims that "It is our duty to do our best to improve the earth, to improve the lot of our fellow men, to establish peace amongst the peoples of the world" (1975:57). My point is that for a Muslim the improvement of the lot of mankind cannot in itself be the highest ethical imperative to obey. Muslims uphold an even higher moral obligation to God; and mankind is served only within the context of a Muslim's service to God. "Moral law," writes Brohi, "is a transcendent law: obedience to it brings about, as a necessary result, material progress: but it is wrong to suppose that a direct pursuit of economic growth and progress would necessarily make men moral. Oh! no, it is the other way round" (1975:60).

What I think is most significant about the Islamic rejection of Western morality is that it demonstrates how the world-system may promote religiosity in the form of rebellion against its own legitimating ideology. The spiritual bankruptcy, from the perspective of mythologizing civilizational traditions such as Islam, of the Western obsession with progress and humanity has engendered revivals of "otherworldly" forms of religiosity within these civilizations that so acutely feel the need to be grounded in a particularity. It is most curious that Islam has been able to stand both within and without the world, in the sense of being grounded in a particularity while simultaneously internalizing the production imperatives of the world-system. It is equally curious that contemporary Western civilization appears to lack a firm grounding of this sort if this is indeed, as Kavolis claims,

essential for maintaining a sense of identity in a highly pluralistic world.

Neither the legitimation crisis of the world-system nor the identity crisis of Western civilization seem to make any difference to the stability of the globe. Both crises provide the impetus for contemporary worldwide religious resurgences that matter just as little.

### Conclusion

My paper supports the conclusion that what is essential for a civilization's integration into the world-system is not addressing questions about the human condition nor being grounded in a particularity but adapting to the functional imperatives of capitalism and the nation-state. It is these mundane institutions of everyday international relations, not the contortions of spiritual evisceration or efflorescence, that make or break civilizations in the modern world. I even suspect that, with the emergence of the United States of Europe, the nation-state will soon be replaced by the international community as the goal-attainment imperative of the world-system. This leaves capitalism alone as the most *imperative* imperative of the globe.

University of Pittsburgh

### REFERENCES

- Abdul-Rauf, Muhamamd. 1984. *A Muslim's Reflections on Democratic Capitalism*. Washington, DC: American Enterprise.
- Brohi, A. K. 1975. *Islam in the Modern World*. Lahore, Pakistan: Publishers United.
- Cuddihy, John Murray. 1987. *The Ordeal of Civility*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Eisenstadt, S. N. 1963. *Modernization: Growth and Diversity*. Bloomington, IN: Department of Government, Indiana University.
- . 1966. *Modernization: Protest and Change*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Espósito, John. 1987. *Islam and Politics*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.
- Habermas, Jürgen. 1975. *Legitimation Crisis*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Kavolis, Vytautas. 1987. "History of Consciousness and Civilization Analysis." *Comparative Civilizations Review* 17:1-19.
- . "Contemporary Moral Cultures and 'The Return of the Sacred.'" *Sociological Analysis*, forthcoming.
- Meyer, John. 1980. "The World Polity and the Authority of the Nation-

- State." In Albert Bergesen, ed., *Studies of the Modern World-System*. New York: Academic Press. Pp. 109-137.
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. 1987. *Traditional Islam in the Modern World*. London: KPI.
- Parsons, Talcott. 1965. "An Outline of the Social System." In Talcott Parsons ed., *Theories of Society*. New York: Free Press. Pp. 30-79.
- . 1966. *Societies: Evolutionary and Comparative Perspectives*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- . 1971. *The System of Modern Societies*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- . 1978. *Action Theory and the Human Condition*. New York: Free Press.
- Parsons, Talcott, and Smelser, Neil. 1956. *Economy and Society*. New York: Free Press.
- Piscatori, James. 1986. *Islam in a World of Nation-States*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Robertson, Roland. 1983. "Religion, Global Complexity and the Human Condition." In *Absolute Values and the Creation of the New World, Vol. 1*. New York: International Cultural Foundation. Pp. 185-211.
- . 1984. "Interpreting Globality." In *World Realities and International Studies Today*. Glenside, PA: Pennsylvania Council on International Education. Pp. 7-19.
- . 1985. "The Sacred and the World-System." In Phillip Hammond ed., *The Sacred in a Secular Age*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Pp. 347-358.
- . 1987. "Church-State Relations and the World-System." In Thomas Robbins and Roland Robertson, eds., *Church-State Relations*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books. Pp. 39-51.
- . 1987a. "Globalization Theory and Civilization Analysis." *Comparative Civilizations Review* 17:20-30.
- Robertson, Roland, and Chirico, JoAnn. 1985. "Humanity, Globalization, and Worldwide Religious Resurgence." *Sociological Analysis* 46:219-242.
- Robertson, Roland, and Lechner, Frank. 1985. "Modernization, Globalization and the Problem of Culture in World-System Theory." *Theory, Culture and Society* 2:103-117.
- Rodinson, Maxime. 1974. *Islam and Capitalism*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel. 1974. *The Modern World-System*. New York: Academic Press.
- . 1974a. "The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 16:387-414.
- . 1983. "Crises: The World-Economy, the Movements, and the Ideologies." In Albert Bergesen ed., *Crisis in the World-System*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications. Pp. 21-36.
- Wilkinson, David. 1987. "Central Civilization." *Comparative Civilizations Review* 17:31-59.
- Wolterstorff, Nicholas. 1983. *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmann's Publishing Co.