

## GLOBALIZATION AND THE RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM

I. DEJEU, L. PETRILA

Ioana Dejeu<sup>1</sup>, Laurențiu Petrila<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Faculty of History, International Relations, Political Sciences & Communication Sciences, University of Oradea, Romania. E-mail: [dejeuioana\\_87@yahoo.com](mailto:dejeuioana_87@yahoo.com)

<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Juridical and Administrative Sciences, Agora University of Oradea & Faculty of History, International Relations, Political Sciences and Communication Sciences, University of Oradea, Romania. E-mail: [lauren.petrila@gmail.com](mailto:lauren.petrila@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** *Globalization is a complex phenomenon that involves the economic, cultural, and political integration of countries and regions around the world. At the same time, this process has influenced and been influenced by various religious movements and ideologies, including religious fundamentalism. Religious fundamentalism represents a strong and often conservative reaction to the rapid changes and perceived alien values brought about by globalization. Although globalization brings multiple benefits, including economic development and cultural exchange, it also generates reactions to defend traditional identities, one of the most notable of which is religious fundamentalism.*

**Keywords:** *globalization, religious, fundamentalism.*

### Introduction

Globalization has propelled areas such as economic development, improved access to technology and information, and the promotion of cultural diversity. However, this process has not been without controversy and conflict. Critics of globalization point to growing economic inequalities, the loss of local cultural identities, and negative impacts on the environment. In this context, globalization is perceived by some religious groups as a threat to traditional values and ways of life, which has fueled the growth of fundamentalist movements.

Religious fundamentalism often arises as a reaction to perceptions of threat and alienation caused by processes of modernization and globalization. These fundamentalist movements aim to reaffirm religious and cultural identities through strict adherence to sacred texts and the rejection of external influences considered corrupting. In a globalized context, fundamentalist movements may find new ways to organize themselves and spread their messages, including through the use of the Internet and social media.

### 1. Globalization versus religious fundamentalism

Globalization does not have a universally accepted and probably definitive definition. The reason lies in the fact that globalization subsumes a multitude of complex processes with variable dynamics affecting various areas of a society. It can be a phenomenon, an ideology, a strategy, or all of them together. Globalization is used to describe a multi-causal process that results in events that occur in one part of the globe having increasingly broad repercussions on societies and issues in other parts of the globe. Globalization is the process

of international integration that results from the exchange of opinions, products, ideas and other aspects of culture worldwide (Guyford, 1972:1-3). Advances in transportation and telecommunications infrastructure, including the development of the telegraph and its successor the internet, are major factors in globalization, generating further interdependence of economic and cultural activities (Albrow, 1990).

The growth of international trade, foreign direct investment flows and the integration of financial markets have developed globalization from an economic point of view. The diffusion of culture, values and ideas through the media and the Internet tend to emphasize the cultural aspect, while the formation of international organizations and treaties regulating relations between states highlight the political aspect.

Although scholars place the origin of globalization in modern times, others trace its history back well before the European era of discovery and travel to the New World. Some even trace its origins to the third millennium BCE (Wolf, 2014:22-25). In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the connectivity of the world's economies and cultures evolved very rapidly. People had been interacting over long distances for thousands of years, the Silk Road connecting Asia, Africa, and Europe, is a good example of the transformative power of trans-local exchange that existed in the "Old World" (Bentley, 1993:32).

Philosophy, religion, language, art, and other aspects of culture spread and mixed simultaneously with the national exchange of goods and ideas. In the 15th and 16th centuries, Europeans made important discoveries in ocean exploration, including the beginning of transatlantic voyages to the "New World" of the Americas (Bentley, 1993:33). The global movement of people, goods, and ideas expanded significantly in the following centuries. In the early 19th century, the development of new forms of transportation, such as steamships and railroads, and telecommunications that compressed time and space, allowed for increasingly rapid rates of global exchange (Cambridge Core). In the 20th century, road vehicles, intermodal transport, as well as airline companies, made things move even faster (Bentley, 1993:33). The advent of electronic communications, most notably mobile phones and especially the internet, has connected billions of people in new ways (Kamal, 2002:191-235).

The term has been used increasingly since the mid-1980s and especially since the mid-1990s. In 2000, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) identified four basic aspects of globalization: trade and transactions, capital and investment movements, migration and movement of people, and the dissemination of knowledge (International Monetary Fund, 2000). In addition, environmental challenges, such as climate change, transboundary water, air pollution, and overfishing of the oceans, are linked to globalization (Bridges, 2002:61-86). Globalization processes affect and are affected by business and work organization, the economy, socio-cultural resources, and the natural environment (Babones, 2008:146).

The "First Era of Globalization" is thought to have broken down into phases with World War I and then, falling into the gold standard crisis of the late 1920s and early 1930s. The countries that had begun to embrace the era of globalization, including the European core, a few states on the periphery of Europe, and a few European offshoots in the Americas and Oceania, were prospering. Inequality between those states was disappearing as goods, capital, and labor formed exceptionally free flows between states.

Globalization in the post-World War II period was driven by rounds of negotiations initially under the auspices of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which led to several agreements to remove restrictions on free trade. The Uruguay Round led to the signing of a treaty creating the World Trade Organization (WTO), which was to mediate trade disputes. Other bilateral trade agreements, including sections of the Maastricht Treaty and NAFTA, were also signed with the aim of reducing tariffs and trade barriers.

There is also an air of skepticism towards global economic processes and optimism towards the possibilities of controlling the international economy and towards the viability of national political strategies. A particularly important effect of the concept of globalization has been the paralysis of national strategies of radical reform, being seen as impossible to achieve from a rational point of view and from the evolution of international markets.

With improvements in transportation and communications, international business has grown rapidly since the early 20th century, encompassing all commercial transactions (private sales, investments, logistics, and transportation) that take place between two or more regions, countries, and nations, across their political borders (Riley, 2005). Such international diversification is linked to firm performance and innovation, positive in the case of the former and often negative in the case of the latter. Typically, private companies engage in such transactions for profit. These business transactions involve economic resources, such as capital, natural and human resources, used for the international production of physical goods and services, such as finance, banking, insurance, construction and other productive activities (O'Sullivan et al., 2003:453).

International trade agreements have led to the formation of multinational enterprises, companies that have a global approach to markets and production, or operations in multiple countries. A multinational enterprise can also be a multinational corporation or transnational corporation (Voorhees et al., 1992:144). Well-known multinational corporations include fast-food companies such as McDonald's and Yum Brands, vehicle manufacturers such as General Motors, Ford Motor Company, and Toyota, consumer electronics companies such as Samsung, LG, and Sony, and energy companies such as ExxonMobil, Shell, and BP. Most of the largest corporations operate in multiple national markets. Businesses generally argue that survival in the new global marketplace requires companies to source goods, services, labor, and materials from overseas to continually upgrade their products and technology in order to survive increased competition.

The close relationship between globalization and religious vitality may have multiple causes, but it is mainly motivated by the instinct and need of man to protect his own identity as best he can. And this is clearly visible not only in the case of the religiosity and religious behavior of individuals or populations that emigrate, but also in that of the religions of native populations.

Religious fundamentalism refers to movements or ideologies that advocate a return to traditional religious values and practices and reject modern influences and secularism. This tendency can occur within any religion and is often associated with a literal interpretation of sacred texts. Rigid attachment to religious doctrines, opposition to modern changes, and the tendency to see one's own religion as the only true one can be noted as key characteristics of religious fundamentalism, and notable examples around the world include fundamentalist

Christianity in the United States, fundamentalist Islam in the Middle East, and fundamentalist Hinduism in India.

The process of globalization also contributes to the intensification of conflicts, already known since the beginning of the 20th century. Like the process of modernization in general, globalization strengthens pluralism within religious traditions. And fundamentalism in all the world's religions bases its dynamics, above all, on the competition between liberal religious currents and traditionalist-conservative ones within the various religions. As José Casanova emphasizes, religion not only does not disappear, but even makes a positive contribution, in the midst of the era of globalization, especially in terms of the coexistence of religions and cultures (Casanova, 1996:181-210). Thus, in recent years, representatives of various religions and religious movements have proven to be among the most consistent defenders of human rights. Any analysis aiming to decipher the relationship between religion and the local or global element must begin with understanding the connection between religion and nationalism or transnationalism, respectively. To approach this extremely complex phenomenon, a starting point could be Ronald Robertson's observation that the depoliticization of religion was only a central myth of the project of social modernization.

The repoliticization of religion that we are witnessing today is nothing more than one of the multiple effects of the globalization process. Considered a socio-cultural category (in other than Western societies), religion has acquired an essential role both in the structuring of collective identity and as a personal need of individuals in the dynamics of globalization (Robertson, 1991:289).

The global sphere, being a secular one, cannot function in the absence of the laity. In its essence, it is multipolar, multicultural, open, confident in secular legal mechanisms and norms that do not depend on the pressure exerted by clerical courts. Public policies, similar to the policies that shape international relations, are based on documents of a different nature than those conceived by various radical religious groups. Religiously motivated violence cannot be placed among the basic characteristics of the global sphere, nor can it be considered representative of the presence and influence of religion at the global level.

The phrase "religious fundamentalism" was used in the US before the 1970s, and after the Iranian Revolution, it was used more and more frequently globally. The analysis of this phenomenon, which has become a definite presence in international relations, leads to the conclusion that fundamentalisms are activated by the revival of spiritual movements or by powerful religious groups (Robertson, 1991:289). It is often stated that the phenomenon of religious fundamentalism has begun to contradict all sociological predictions regarding the expansion of secularization at all levels of society.

The evangelical movements in the USA, the Pentecostal ones in Latin America, the fundamentalist Jews in Israel, the Islamic fundamentalism in Muslim countries, the Catholic fundamentalism in certain European countries, the Hindu fundamentalism in India or the Orthodox Christian in certain post-communist Eastern European countries are sufficient evidence to support the global character of this phenomenon. However, it cannot be said that these movements represent a global revival of the religion to which they are related. It cannot be said that Islam, Christianity, Judaism or any other religion is the actor on the global stage. There is always the possibility of observing which religious groups are pushing the limits of the religion on whose territory they emerged. The interventions and violent manifestations of

certain religious groups at a global level should not be perceived within the framework of religions, but rather as ideological actions within religious fundamentalisms. Or more precisely, one could say that the conflict situation maintained by ideological groups that justify their violence regarding religion must be viewed from the perspective of the metamorphosis of religions into ideologies.

And whenever religious consciousness is mentioned, radical groups are perceived and act as entities with socio-political claims and support a religious conflict in the name of redrawing maps or religious belief.

The term globalization should be understood as describing a planetary phenomenon through which the states of the world are integrated into a more coherent system of relations based on economic, technological, political, etc., something that may imply that these processes of globalization and secularization are simultaneous. But, beyond all this, globalization is a phenomenon that is based on the value hierarchies of secularism, pluralism and respect for otherness. To correctly perceive globalization as a world phenomenon, it is less important that certain processes have a similar dialectic. throughout the globe, but more that the elites of a society situate their own society in a global hierarchy. In the complex process of establishing a hierarchy, the economic factor was considered essential, imposing a certain division of the world but also enunciating a global model of culture, and this became the depository of global standards in the political order.

Reactions to this process, especially of a religious nature, immediately showed their presence. Global culture became the target of fundamentalist movements. Thus, it can be observed that the reaction against modernity has revealed its global implications. Religious fundamentalisms rise up against the configurations of the global structure, acting in the direction of changing power relations and cultural ones, models considered "impure". Religious fundamentalisms are not only a reaction against modernity but also against a global model structured on the model of functioning of Western societies. But Westernization imposes diversity and multiculturalism. Therefore, the type of reaction developed by fundamentalisms is closely related to the balance of ethnological memory of the forces that characterize various cultures, societies or regions (Lechner, 2000:338).

Likewise, fundamentalism could be considered an essential element of globality, of change, imposed by the desire to establish a certain religious tradition, as the basis of the social and global order, as the basis of a cultural identity related to the identity of global culture. In a global perspective, fundamentalism is a form of anti-modernism that is inevitably contaminated by modernism, namely by the global culture represented by the culture of modernism. This means that the problem of otherness should be treated in terms of a repertoire globality, of a common society that orients entities towards each other in the process of action (Lechner, 2000:339-341). At the same time, as an active vector in modernization processes, fundamentalism should have an increasingly limited role in the context of the development of liberal modernity, even if fundamentalism starts from the real dissatisfactions of individuals, from the tensions induced by globalization, from a series of real contradictions between local and global cultures.

If the force of fundamentalism dissipates, then this would be a fulfilled condition for the vitalization of authentic religiosity. On the other hand, the rebirth of religiosity would be

a failure if it did not take into account the fact that in modernity religion is losing its traditional social and political role.

For a detailed analysis of the phenomenon of religious fundamentalism, it is necessary to take into account the relationship between the two essential components of the globalization process: the discourse and institutional construction that create the global situation and the focus on the preservation and development of local structures. The global-local interconditioning was analyzed from the perspective of appealing to the search for foundations as an ideal of authenticity in the conditions of the "compression" of the world in a way unprecedented in history. The global character of the search for foundations makes fundamentalism a global phenomenon. There is mention of a number of ideas disseminated at a global level, ideas that come from tradition, identity, indigeneity, the fact of feeling at home, all of which constitute true lines of force that are at the basis of the processes of reflexivity and choice in a global context (Robertson, 1991:170).

## **2. Types of religious fundamentalist movements**

Fundamentalist Islam evolved as a reaction to colonialism, modernization, and Western influences perceived as a threat to traditional Islam. Key organizations that support it include the Muslim Brotherhood, Al-Qaeda, and the Islamic State (ISIS) (Juergensmeyer, 2003). Fundamentalist Islamic movements seek to re-establish an Islamic state based on strict interpretations of Sharia and reject Western values, moving towards implementing Sharia law in regions controlled by ISIS and attempting to establish an Islamic caliphate. The impact of fundamentalism on Muslim communities can be profound, often leading to internal conflict and polarization, as exemplified by the conflicts between moderate and radical Muslims in countries such as Pakistan and Iraq (Tibi, 1998).

Fundamentalist Christianity in the United States emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a reaction to modernism and the theory of evolution, with key organizations such as the Family Research Council and the Westboro Baptist Church, seeking to maintain literal interpretations of the Bible and promote traditional Christian values. It opposes abortion, same-sex marriage, and sex education in schools. Christian fundamentalism has had a significant impact on American politics and culture, influencing legislation and social debates, and leaving its mark on presidential elections and public policies regarding abortion and education.

Fundamentalist Hinduism grew in India as a reaction to colonial influences and secularization movements, with key organizations being the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Fundamentalist Hinduism seeks to promote a Hindu national identity and marginalize religious minorities, and advocates anti-conversion laws and cow protection policies. Hindu fundamentalism has significantly influenced Indian politics, contributing to the rise of religious nationalism and interfaith tensions, resulting in violence against Muslim and Christian minorities.

## **Conclusions**

Globalization and religious fundamentalism are interconnected phenomena that shape the contemporary world in complex and often contradictory ways. Globalization, through economic and cultural interconnectedness, can generate reactions to defend traditional

religious and cultural identities, manifested through fundamentalist movements. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing effective strategies to promote peace, stability, and peaceful coexistence in today's globalized world. Religious fundamentalism can lead to violations of human rights, including the rights of women and minorities. Fundamentalist movements can undermine democratic governments and cause regional and global instability.

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