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GUEST EDITORIAL**Militant Religion and Globalization****Mervyn F. Bendle***James Cook University*

The September 11 terrorist attacks in America and the subsequent 'war on terrorism' underline the need for the sociology of religion and religion studies generally to conduct analyses of the rise of militant religious movements (particularly, but not exclusively, Islamic) and of their relationship with the various processes of globalization that are reshaping the world. These disciplines have very considerable theoretical, conceptual and empirical resources to draw upon and have much to contribute in the present situation.

Such analyses would focus closely on the rise and nature of Islamism and related forms of militant religious insurgency and terrorism exploring these in all their dimensions. Islamism (ie., political Islam or Islamic Fundamentalism (Marty and Appleby, 1990;1995)) is a major global phenomenon with a significant presence not only in most Muslim societies but also in many Western societies (eg., within globalized diasporas) (Roy, 1994; Sivan, 1990). It is a species of anti-globalism, opposing not only capitalism but modernity in its present form, and ultimately the imperialist and *jahili* (ignorant) 'Crusader civilization' of 'the West' as such (Qutb, 1978; Yousef, 2000). It is characterized by an unyielding and comprehensive rejection of the West, including secularism, modernization, and democracy; the reformulation and mobilization of Islam as a militant political ideology focused on the ideal of jihad (Holy War) (Sivan, 1998), drawing on Western models such as fascism, and committed to terrorism and other forms of subconventional warfare (Fukayama, 2002). It has an intense, often fanatical, commitment to the imposition of Islamic sacred law as the basis of society, especially with respect to the treatment of women and the close regulation of everyday life (Huband, 1999). Islamism postulates 'a qualitative contradiction between Western civilization and the religion of Islam,' with Islam understood as 'a comprehensive and transcendental world view [that] excludes the validity of all other systems and values,' while serving as 'a modern ideology capable of absorbing all scientific and technological innovations without being tainted with their philosophical substratum' (Choueri, 1997:123). In this fashion, Islamism seeks to 'use the tools that globalization provides' to subvert modernity, overthrow American

hegemony within the world-system, while extending its 'philosophy of an all-Muslim resurgence' on a global scale (Bodansky, 1999:389). The roots of Islamism lie in the Islamic revivalism of the 18th and 19th centuries, especially Wahhabism, and in the so-called 'Islamic Resurgence' of the latter half of the 20th century. Its principal leaders and ideologues include Abul Ala Mawdudi, Hasan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb, Ayatollah Ruhallah Khomeini and Ali Shariati (Esposito, 1983). It gives expression to the experience of the Muslim world in the 20th century that stands as one of the most significant if often tragic events of contemporary history.

Islamism is a very prominent example of the broader phenomenon of anti-modernist religious militancy found in many societies across the world that are undergoing modernization and integration into the globalized world system (Kepel, 1994; Juergensmayer, 2000). Terrorist groups include Christians, Muslims, Jews, Sikhs, Hindus and religious cults like Aum Shinkyō. As Mark Juergensmayer (2000:228) has recently pointed out:

Neither anomalies nor anachronisms ... these small but potent groups of violent activists have represented growing masses of supporters, and they have exemplified currents of thinking and cultures of commitment that have arisen to counter the prevailing modernism ... that has emerged in the past three centuries from the European Enlightenment and spread throughout the world. They have come to hate secular governments with an almost transcendent passion [dreaming] of revolutionary changes that would establish a godly social order in the rubble of what the citizens of most secular societies have regarded as modern, egalitarian democracies.

Given this extremism, 'the logic of this kind of militant religiosity has ... been difficult for many people to comprehend' (Juergensmayer, 2000:228). Consequently, an analysis of such movements may require a new paradigm if it is fully to comprehend the implications of religious militancy for the crisis of modernity that religious extremism is both responding to and exacerbating (Monshipouri, 1998). Such a paradigm must proceed from a primary global analysis of religions undertaken at a foundational level; recognize the motivating power of religions understood as 'total life-worlds'; be informed by a comparative understanding of globalization and the crisis of modernity; the rise of fundamentalism and the war on secularization; the failure of modernization and the crisis of the state in much of the Islamic world; the rise of Islamism and its significance as an ideology and movement of religious insurgency within host societies. It must also focus on issues of inclusion and exclusion at all levels of global world-system, comprehend the profound implications of the global demographic revolution and the role of religious diaspora within the world system, and offer an informed and critical analysis of the sources of religious violence and extremism (Huntington, 2002). It must also be capable of applying a knowledge of perennial religious phenomena, including the ideals of martyrdom and sacred violence (eg., through suicide bombing), and the role of dualist models that polarize the world into realms of good and evil with an associated demonization and satanization

of enemies seen frequently in terms of a cosmic war. It is becoming increasingly clear that explanations for global terrorism lie 'in the current forces of geopolitics and in a strain of violence that be found at the deepest levels of religious imagination' (Juergensmeyer, 2000:7).

From an Australian perspective, an analysis of religious militancy must focus particularly on its implications for Australia as a nation uniquely positioned within the emerging global crisis, particularly given its twin commitments to multiculturalism and globalization (Saeed and Akbarzadeh, 2001). Australia is in a uniquely challenged position globally: located within a region of political instability, economic insecurity and stupendous projected population growth and migration pressure (McGee, 2001); possessing an ageing population and a shrinking workforce relative to population size; perceived as dependent upon immigration for both economic and population growth; and undergoing very substantial internal economic and social restructuring (Sheil, 2001). This is occurring while Australia seeks to integrate a diverse range of groups within a liberal-democratic political and institutional structure at a time when the legitimacy of such structures is being challenged, firstly, by long-standing and influential internal critiques from the left and the right; secondly, by a generalized malaise and disaffection from the political system; and thirdly, by militant groups with radical politico-religious commitments operating internally and externally (Israeli, 2000). This emerging 'crisis of legitimacy' must in turn be related to the 'politics of identity' (Bendle, 2002) and 'the search for Islamic authenticity' under globalization (Lee, 1997); to radical oppositional ideologies like Islamism; the role of religious diasporas, especially in a multicultural Western nation like Australia (Cohen, 1997); and particularly to processes of identity formation within such religious communities and their interaction with national identities, especially where the latter have been problematized (Bendle, 2001).

This national level analysis must be informed by an understanding of the enormous and frequently contentious literature that has been produced in the past quarter-century on the deteriorating relationship between Islam and the West, exemplified by the rise of Islamism. This situation may be analysed in terms of various models: the dynamics of the capitalist world-system and the effects of Western imperialism, globalization and structural global inequality; the effects of a global fundamentalist reaction to the modernist ideology of secularism; Islamic exceptionalism that sees Islam as inherently in conflict with the West; the 'class of civilizations thesis' that explains global politics in terms of deep-seated civilizational conflict, especially between Islam and the West; a reassertion of the framework and dynamics of the Cold War with different enemies; the interpretation of Islamism as an atavistic distortion of Islam by radical Muslim elements influenced (paradoxically) by Western political models, especially fascism, and having strong totalitarian tendencies; and the world disorder model, according to which the world is presently subject to massive processes of disorder which globalization is both producing and exacerbating. (Tibi 1998)

It is essential to recognize the implications of the failure of the world-system to integrate vast regions of the Muslim world into the globalization project (Bendle, 1999). This failure occurs at all levels: economically, politically, ideologically, culturally and - above all - at the level of religious commitment. Islamism gives expression to the marginalization of a great civilization. It expresses a rage that possesses a spiritual dimension that the West cannot ignore but also cannot fully comprehend, not least because it doesn't comprehend the depths of its own crisis, the price it has had to pay for the form of modernity it has itself embraced. Islamism offers a radical critique of this situation, an alternative analysis of globalization that proceeds from an Islamic worldview. In face of all this, sociology itself may require some new - decentered - paradigms as it strives to make a significant contribution to the intensifying global crisis.

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