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Globalization, Threat and Religious Freedom

While arguably central to the human experience, religion is a largely understudied component of social life and of politics. The comparative literature on religion and politics is limited in scope, and offers mostly descriptions of trends. We know, for example, that restrictions on freedom of religion are on the rise worldwide. In our theoretical framework, the recently higher universal levels of globalization combine with other sources of threat to account for the trend away from religious freedom. As threat to the majority religion increases, due to globalization and an increasing number of minority religions, freedom of religion is on the decline. Data for two decades from 147 nations are used to test hypotheses. Time-series cross-sectional and mediation models estimated at different levels of analysis with data from two independent sources confirm that threat systematically accounts for changes in religious freedom, with globalization playing a key role.

After the much-debated law banning the wearing of religious symbols in schools, France became the first European country to pass a law that prohibits full veils in public, also known as the “Burqa Ban.” In July 2011, following a unanimous vote in the House of Representatives, the Belgian Senate approved legislation that bans all clothing that hides the face, thus making Belgium the second European nation to ban burqas. While state control of and restrictions on the free exercise of religion in non-democratic countries such as China, Iran, Belarus and Myanmar¹ do not come as a surprise, the examples from France and Belgium illustrate that recent trends of limiting religious freedom appear even in established democracies. What is more, students of religious freedom have observed similar trends across many parts of the world in recent decades (Fox 2007a; Silberman 2005).

This trend manifests itself in empirical evidence tapping shifts in global levels of religious freedom. The average level of religious discrimination in the world rose between 1990 and 2002 by 11.4% (Fox 2007a).² In addition, legislation of religion into law and active discrimination against minority religious groups have become commonplace in a number of nations (Fox 2007a). As of 2002, only 28.1% of democratic nations were free from any type of religious discrimination, and 63% of the Western democracies have engaged in at least some type of religious discrimination³ (Fox and Flores 2009). Recent research by the Pew Forum (2009) corroborates these findings – only 27% of governments fully respected the religious rights written into their laws. Moreover, the Rising Restrictions on Religion report from the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life indicates that as of August 2011, roughly a third of the world’s population lives in countries where government restrictions on religion or social hostilities are increasing. Indeed, some 59% of the world’s population lives with high or very high government restrictions on religion. Along the same lines, in only 8% of the

countries previously coded as high on religious restrictions, the 2011 report indicates, conditions are better. What is more, in 95% of the countries previously coded as moderate on religious restrictions, conditions are roughly the same or worse.

Religious communities have long defined themselves against each other. Indeed, the genre of polemics against other religions is ancient and has had a political impact (Nicholson 2007). This paper does not argue that this phenomenon as such is a new development. Rather, it attempts to explain the global trend of rising levels of religious discrimination, focusing empirically on the period between 1990-2002⁴. We suggest that increasing globalization is key to understanding the higher levels of religious legislation and discrimination against minority religions observed in the past decades. The growing integration of economies, cultural interactions and contact between people of different traditions challenge existing value systems and norms, raising perceived threat. A key value system affected by this process is religion; existing religious values and norms are threatened as the salience of other religions and cultures increases due to globalization. This in turn leads policymakers to enact legislation and undertake actions curbing the freedom of minority religious groups.

We put our theory to test using two types of statistical models (Cross Sectional Time Series GEE and mediation analysis) at two levels of analysis with data from two independent sources. First, the aggregate level time series model tests the hypothesis that globalization is a key predictor of religious freedom over time. However, aggregate level data offers no direct measure of perceived threat. Thus, to provide support for the role of perceived threat as a mechanism for the effect of globalization on preference for religious homogeneity, we add a complementary individual level mediation analysis. Together, these two models allow us to

establish the effect of globalization on freedom of religion, and corroborate the mediating role of threat. We conclude by examining the broader implications of this work and offering avenues for future research.

Globalization and Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Evidence is mounting to indicate that restrictions on freedom of religion are on the rise—yet, there is a real paucity of theories explaining these recent trends. While earlier research has generally focused on the effects of religious deregulation on religious commitment and religious activity (Iannaccone 1991; Finke and Stark 1992), some recent work has begun to investigate structural antecedents of state religion (Barro and McCleary 2005), religious legislation (Cosgel and Miceli 2009), religious freedom (Gill 2008) as well as religious persecution (Grim and Finke 2007; 2011) across nations. While these studies contribute to explaining cross level variations in freedom of religion, they do not account for change in levels of religious freedom over time.

This paper is set to fill this gap. We argue that globalization is key to understanding the rise of religious legislation and discrimination against minorities in the past decades, such that globalization induces perceived threat to a hegemonic religion, which leads to more restrictions on religious freedom. By increasing threat perceptions of the masses and raising demand for greater religious and cultural homogeneity, globalization creates conditions for policymakers to restrict religious activities by minority groups. It is often argued that the desire to preserve national and religious culture has become more intense with globalization, which itself has grown in scale, speed and importance over the past decades (Fox 2007a; Kinnvall 2004).⁵ Contemporary globalization has reduced transaction costs across a range of human interactions, opening up new opportunities and exposing social systems to new ways

of thinking (Hollingsworth 1998). Globalization, therefore, has vast social and political implications, as it not only permits the exchange of goods and services but also of ideas, values, and beliefs (Hermans and Kempen 1998; Manners 2000). In fact, social and cultural globalization are probably the broadest and farthest reaching dimensions of the phenomenon, posing various challenges to national and sub-national cultures (Rosendorf 2000). Literature indicates that globalization leads to more rights and freedoms. For instance, Tsutsui and Wotipka (2004) find that embeddedness in global civil society as well as international flows of human resources are key predictors of memberships in human rights international nongovernmental organizations. Indeed, at least one mechanism that may be at work when globalization leads to freedom is a norm cascade, where states adopt norms of rights and freedoms in response to international pressure (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998). Yet, increasing levels of communications and interactions between societies also increasingly challenge existing traditions, values, and identities (Arnett 2002).

Globalization has increased interpersonal contacts between individuals from culturally diverse backgrounds. People move more across the globe as tourists, immigrants, refugees or international students and businesspeople (Appadurai 2000; Ward et al. 2001). Globalization has also increased non-personal contacts between societies. There is heightened awareness of different cultures through mass media, information flows, and a spread of commodities with symbolic cultural value, such as products of multinational companies (e.g., IKEA) and global food chains (e.g., McDonald's or Starbucks). These developments expose individuals across the globe to myriad cultural influences, which increase the salience of differences between one's own group and others. While some scholars argue that this process is accompanied by a tendency towards cultural uniformity (Kochler 2004: 2; Hermans and DiMaggio 2007: 33),

the movement of ideas, information, knowledge, religions and cultures across the globe also has a starkly different effect - it intensifies heterogeneity, highlights cultural differences, sharpens cultural contrasts and hence increases acrimony (Meyer and Geschiere 1999). It is perceived threat to religion induced by globalization, we argue, that leads to increasing restrictions on freedom of religion.

Globalization as Threat to Hegemonic Religion

David Campbell (2006) extrapolates the Religious Threat Hypothesis from the classical Racial Threat Hypothesis. Campbell suggests that *ceteris paribus*, the probability of Evangelicals voting Republican increases with the fraction of secular people in the congressional county. His explanation for the religious threat effect derives from classical theories in political psychology; the closer the out-group and the stronger it seems, the more threat it seems to pose to one's way of life, values and to the in-group. Our theoretical framework expands the Religious Threat Hypothesis beyond the American context (Campbell 2006; Putnam and Campbell 2010; Campbell 2007). In our work, threat is the mechanism that accounts for the worldwide effect of globalization on religious freedom.

Religion is a set of beliefs, values and social norms, which allow a person to identify and be identified as belonging to an organized group (Wald and Smidt 1993; Kellstedt et al. 1997; Ben-Nun Bloom and Arikan 2011). While attachment to one's own group does not necessarily translate to hostility towards other groups (Allport 1954), threat often does motivate in-group bias, and sets up a tendency to discriminate against others (Brewer 1999; Stephan and Stephan 2001). We contend that increasing awareness of diverse cultures, ideas, and traditions as a result of globalization increases the perception of threat to religious, cultural and national integrity and results in a backlash that manifests itself in distrust of and even aggressive

attitudes towards alien cultures and lifestyles (Kochler 2004: 4). Globalization, thus, creates a threat to the sense of group integrity, which in turn leads to fears of loss of identity and the sense of a disintegrating community (Streeten 1998) and generates strong resistance towards other value systems, such as other religions (Kinnvall 2004:742).

The two key explanations for heightened threat perception as a response to cultural diversity of the kind fostered by globalization are Realistic Group Conflict Theory and Social Identity Theory. Realistic Group Conflict Theory (Bobo 1988; Sherif 1966) suggests that individuals are concerned with the welfare and shared interests of their group (as manifested in jobs, health benefits, and security) when such interests are potentially jeopardized by members of foreign groups (Hoskin 1991; Quillian 1995; Fetzer 2000). In a globalized world, such threats are more likely to arise (Branton and Jones 2005). In addition, the threat posed by other groups may have symbolic sources such as perceived differences in values, beliefs, and moral standards. According to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979; Kinder and Sears 1981), people are motivated to maintain positive identity for their group, and to take part in a symbolic conflict with other groups over the values, culture and moral principles that should guide public life. Thus, the thriving of alternative value systems and cultures in a globalized world raises concerns about the group's culture, values, cohesiveness and distinctiveness, which leads to threatening and exclusionary attitudes towards other groups (Brown 2000; Flippen, Hornstein, Siegal and Weitzman 1996; Postmes and Branscombe 2002; Fetzer 2000; Gibson 2002; Lahav 2004; Sniderman et al. 2004; Lewis 2005). It has been shown that perceived threat is a significant factor in the emergence of prejudice (Stephan and Stephan 1996), ethnocentrism (Levine and Campbell 1972; Struch and Schwartz 1989), exclusionism (Shamir and Sullivan 1985; Stephan and Stephan 2001),

opposition to immigration (Sniderman, Hagendoorn and Prior 2004; Wilson 2001; Stephan et al. 1998; Fetzer 2000), and opposition to bussing and policies aiding African Americans (Bobo 1983; Branton and Jones 2005). In a recent study, views towards Muslims were primarily influenced by perceptions of security threats, while cultural threats were only indirectly related (Wike and Grim 2010).

One potential manifestation of increased threat perception due to globalization is a retreat into the religious or cultural group of origin, accompanied by a tendency to become more protective of the group's values (Tajfel and Dawson 1965). Research shows that, indeed, increased identification with one's religious or cultural group may serve as a buffer against the threat perceived as emanating from other groups (Greenberg, Solomon and Pyszczynski 1997; Solomon, Greenberg and Pyszczynski 1991). Increased cultural contact brought on by globalization increases awareness of the plurality of religions, which challenges traditions legitimating the religious identity of a homogeneous religion (Riis 2007: 251). The uncertainty, ambiguity and complexity that occur as a result foster increased reliance on religious identity in an effort to consolidate collective identities that can provide security (Kinnvall 2004). Religions supply particularly powerful stories and beliefs because of their ability to convey a picture of security, stability, and answers to some of life's key questions (Kinnvall 2004: 742). Politicized religion depicts one's group as homogeneous, and glosses over internal differences, thus creating a perceived shield of security (Eriksen 1999). Stronger religious identity, combined with augmented perceived threat and negative attitudes towards others should lead, in the face of increasing globalization, to demands for restrictions on minority religions. Lastly, the fact that religious discrimination in many parts of the world focuses on public expressions of religion (Fox 2007a) is supportive of the view that nations

increasingly seek to preserve their culture, when it is threatened by globalization. In sum, as the level of globalization in the nation increases, we expect to witness a depressing effect on the freedom of religion.

H1: Globalization Hypothesis: As a country's overall level of globalization increases, so do legislation and restrictions curbing minority groups' religious freedom.

While we expect overall levels of globalization to affect levels of religious freedom, globalization is a multidimensional phenomenon with economic, social and political aspects. The aspect of globalization constituting the greatest alleged threat to national cultures is social globalization, since increasing personal contact, information flows and cultural exchanges can make people more aware of the presence of other cultures. Economic globalization, too, can lead to increased threat perception, since trade and foreign direct investment lead to the spread of commodities and global chains with high symbolic value; such implantation also generates local resistance (see for example Wallerstein 2001; Venkatesh 1995). While we expect these two dimensions of globalization to have a recognizably detrimental effect on religious freedom, political globalization is expected to have a weaker effect. Citizens of a country are rarely aware of increasing political proximity between nations, unless motivated to stay politically updated. Given the low worldwide levels of political knowledge and political interest, shifts towards globalization on this dimension are expected to go almost unnoticed by the public.

Globalization is part of the picture, but other factors, those that are internal to the country's political system, may contribute to the rise as well. As Grim (2012) indicates, the legal framework in the country as well as social restrictions on religion may also be consequential. As a complement to the effect of globalization, thus, threat to the majority

religion can arise from within the country. One way in which threat to the majority religion can arise from within the country is manifested by the visibility of minority religions. In a country, the traditions legitimating the religious identity of a homogeneous religion are further challenged by an additional set of competitive symbolic claims with the visible presence of every additional minority religion. The core values, norms and networks that enhance the nation's social capital (Putnam 1993) are increasingly threatened as more and more out-groups enter the public sphere. In sum, we expect the presence of visible religious minorities to result in sharper decreases to religious freedom.

H2: Religious Minorities Hypothesis: With more visible minority religions in a country, legislation and restrictions curbing minority groups' religious freedom will be more prevalent.

Additional Explanations of Religious Freedom

We also test for the effect of structural factors that are theorized to account for cross-national variation in levels of religious freedom. The religious composition of the society is often cited as an important source affecting the relationship between the state and religion. According to Gill (2008), even in pluralist societies, religious leaders may desire higher government restrictions on other religions in order to prevent them from posing a challenge. On the other hand, they still demand freedom of religion, since government imposition of restrictions on one faith could potentially jeopardize their own denomination's religious practices. Under such circumstances, political actors who are concerned with their political survival will work to protect religious rights and liberties. Therefore, religious restrictions and legislation are expected to be lower in religiously diverse societies (Cosgel and Miceli 2009).

Prima facie, democracies might be expected to restrict religious freedoms less since such freedoms are at the heart of a democratic form of government (Diamond 1999; Stepan 2000).

Yet, research has failed to verify a consistent relationship between democracy and religious freedom. Fox and Flores (2009) show no significant link between democracy and the extent of religious legislation. In addition, the majority of democratic states engage in some level of religious discrimination (Fox and Flores 2009). Similarly, levels of democracy have no effect on state interference with religious affairs (Cosgel and Miceli 2009). In sum, we do not expect to find a consistent relationship between levels of democracy and freedom of religion.

Modernization is also expected to result in greater religious freedom. With rising levels of education and urbanization, and advances in science and technology, the demise of religion as a social and political force was expected (Stark 1999). Contrary to these predictions, however, modernization (measured as per capita GDP) is associated with higher levels of government involvement in religion (Fox 2006; 2007b). According to Fox, this may be because of “a backlash against modernization’s undermining of the traditional community and an increased ability of both religious and political institutions to involve themselves in more areas of life and cause greater clashes between them” (Fox 2006: 562). Therefore, in contrast to the modernization paradigm, we do not expect to find a statistically significant relationship between economic development and religious freedom.

On the other hand, we do expect to find a significant relationship between hegemonic religious traditions, levels of religious restriction and the extent of religious legislation. Specifically, we expect Muslim nations to restrict religious freedoms more. The Muslim tradition lacks a separation of state and religion due to Prophet Mohammad’s fusion of military and spiritual authority (Stepan 2000: 47). Furthermore, the common interpretation of Koran is that the true polity in Islam is the fused religious-political community of the *Ummah*, in which there is no legitimate space for other religions (Stepan 2000: 48).

Similarly, Grim and Finke (2007), suggest that unlike Christian traditions, which look to the state as the legitimate authority, the Islamic tradition looks to the community of Muslims and its religious leaders as the legitimate authority (p. 652). Yet, the dhimma contract, which is a part of sharia law, prescribes rights, protections and equality under law to non-Muslim subjects of a Muslim state. Indeed, there is scholarship that attempts to reconcile the tensions among Islam, secularism and liberal democracy (e.g., Hashemi 2009). Overall, however, both existing theories and empirical analyses available in the literature lead us to believe that the scholarly debate notwithstanding, we will find more restrictions on the free exercise of religion in predominantly Muslim nations.

We also control for communist legacy and demographic factors. Communist regimes were characterized by anti-religious policies and propaganda and attempts to destroy organized religion (Froese 2004). Although the fall of communism has generated a religious revival, post-communist countries implement their own religious regulations that tend to favor certain religious groups (Froese 2004: 58). In addition, we control for population size, which has been found to have an effect on government involvement in religion (Barro and McCleary 2005; Cosgel and Miceli 2009).

Data and Methods

To test our hypotheses, we estimate two sets of models – time-series cross-sectional Generalized Estimating Equation analysis at the country level, and mediation analysis at the level of individual citizens. Data and methods for each set of analyses are described in separate subsections below.

Time-Series Cross-Sectional Analysis: For the time-series cross-sectional analyses presented here, we use generalized estimating equations to estimate the parameters of the

generalized linear models explaining our outcome variables. Data for religious freedom come from the Religion and State (RAS) project. This is a university-based project that includes a set of measures used to systematically gauge the intersection between government and religion. We use two common measures of religious freedom (see Fox 2007a; 2008a; Fox and Flores 2009). *Religious Legislation* is the first dependent variable, which ranges from 0 (no religious legislation) to 32 (all types of religious legislation are present, such as dietary laws; restrictions or prohibitions on the sale of alcoholic beverages; personal status defined by clergy; laws of inheritance defined by religion; restrictions on conversions away from the dominant religion; restrictions on interfaith marriages; restrictions on public dress; blasphemy laws; censorship on anti-religious grounds; mandatory closings or restrictions on businesses on holidays; religious education in public schools; public funding of religious schools; government funding of religious charities; religious taxes; official government positions for clergy; speeches in places of worship require government approval; official clerical positions made by government appointment; department of government dealing with religious affairs; government officials given position in state church; religious officials may become government officials; government officials must meet certain religious requirements; religious courts; some legislative seats are granted along religious lines; prohibitive restrictions on abortion; religious symbols on state's flag; religion listed in state identity cards; official registration of religious organizations with government; official government body monitoring minority religions; other types of restrictions on women; other religious prohibitions or practices that are mandatory). This variable measures the extent to which religion is legislated into law. *Religious Legislation* taps how much control governments exert on religious groups and to what extent they regulate lifestyle and religious practices –

actions that run contrary to freedom of religion. *Religious Discrimination toward Minorities* is the second outcome variable used to measure the extent of religious freedom. As they are qualitatively different, the Fox coding scheme uses separate variables to code restrictions on majority and minority religions. As the coders concede, the variable for restrictions on minority religions, which we use here, taps predominantly religious motivations for such constraints as it codes restrictions on the practice of religion (rather than other types of restrictions on religious minorities). *Religious Discrimination* ranges from 0 (no restrictions on minorities) to 48 (minorities are prohibited or sharply restricted from public observance of religious services, building and maintaining places of worship, are forced to observe religious laws of other groups, their religious organizations are restricted, religious education restricted, there is arrest or harassment of religious figures, restrictions on the ability to make materials necessary for religious rites, restrictions on ability to write, disseminate or publish religious material, restrictions on observance of religious laws concerning personal status, forced conversions, restrictions on proselytizing, and requirement for minority religious to register in order to be legal or receive special tax status).⁶ To facilitate interpretation by allowing a comparison of effect sizes, both variables are recoded to vary between 0 and 1. Higher values were coded to indicate higher levels of regulation and discrimination⁷. Figure 1 depicts the mean of the two outcome variables over time, as well as their trends by level of religious fractionalization. Both religious legislation and discrimination have increased in the time period under study. As expected, legislation and discrimination against minorities are higher in nations with low levels of denominational fractionalization, but exist even in nations with denominational pluralism.

[Insert Figure 1 here]

The *Globalization Scale* is the weighted average of three variables: social globalization, economic globalization and political globalization (Dreher 2006; Dreher et al. 2008). The *Social Globalization* measure includes three categories of indicators: personal contacts (e.g., telephone traffic and tourism), information flows (e.g., number of internet users), and cultural proximity (e.g., trade books and number of IKEA warehouses per capita). *Economic Globalization* is measured by restrictions on trade and capital such as tariff rates, and by actual flows of trade and investments. The index of *Political Globalization* is determined by the number of embassies and high commissions in a country, the number of memberships the country has in international organizations, participation in UN peace-keeping missions, and the number of international treaties signed since 1945. *Denominational Fractionalization* consists of one minus the Herfindahl index of denomination shares⁸ for the year 2000 from the Religion Adherence Data of Robert Barro. This measure reflects the probability that two randomly selected people in a given country will not belong to the same religious denomination.⁹ Higher values indicate higher levels of denominational fractionalization in society. *Number of Minority Religions* is the number of minority religions with adherents amounting to 5 percent of the population or more, and ranges from 0 to 4. *Percent Catholics*, *Percent Orthodox*, *Percent Muslims* and *Percent Protestants* reflect the share of each of these denominations in the population (RAS dataset). To measure *Democratic Conditions*, we utilize the Freedom House/Polity measure, which transforms the average of Freedom House and Polity scales to a 0 (least democratic) to 10 (most democratic) scale, and imputes the values where data on Polity are missing by regressing Polity on the average (Hadenius and

Teorell 2005).¹⁰ GDP per capita in constant US dollars at base year 2000 was used as a proxy for level of modernization (Gleditsch 2002). *Post-communism* is a dummy variable, coded 1 if the country has a communist legacy. Lastly, *Population* is the logged value of the size of the nation's population (See appendix for descriptive statistics).

We use time-series cross-sectional data, listing all states in the abovementioned datasets for which data were available for the period 1990-2002. We employ a generalized estimating equation (GEE) model (Zorn 2001). A marginal approach, such as the GEE, is appropriate in this case since we are interested in the variables that influence religious freedom rather than the propensity to regulate in a particular nation, for which a conditional approach would suffice (p. 475). We employ a GEE model with a first-order autoregressive component. We use robust standard errors clustered on the nation.

Supporting Analysis – Individual Level Cross-Sectional Mediation Models: Our theory suggests that globalization's effect on freedom of religion is channelled through cultural and realistic threat perceived by individuals. Since it is not possible to test this hypothesis at the national level, we make use of individual level data to test our hypothesis concerning underlying mechanisms of the religious threat effect. Thus, to test the extent to which cultural and realistic threats mediate the relationship between globalization and rejection of other religions, we employ mediation analysis and Sobel tests.¹¹

Data for the mediation analyses is drawn from the first module of the European Social Survey (2002-3), which covers 23 countries. The stratified random samples are representative of the residential population.¹² To facilitate interpretation, all measures with the exception of age (years) vary from 0 to 1. As a proxy for position on freedom of religion (the dependent variable), we use *Support for Homogenous Culture*, which is coded from 1

(disagree strongly) to 5 (agree strongly) with the statement: “It is better for the country if almost everyone shares the same customs and traditions”; *Support for Religious Homogeneity* is coded 0 (extremely unimportant) to 10 (extremely important) with respect to the question: “How important, do you think each of these things should be in deciding whether someone born, brought up and living outside [country] should be able to come and live here... : Come from a Christian background?” (in Israel change “Christian” in this item); and, *Opposition to Religious Diversity* coded from 1 (agree strongly) to 5 (disagree strongly) with the statement: “It is better for a country if there is a variety of different religions.”

Attitudes towards our key predictor, globalization, are coded according to the score on *Opposition to Globalization of Public Policy*, which is an index of 8 items: at which level do you think the following policies should mainly be decided? Protecting the environment; fighting against organized crime; agriculture; defense; social welfare; aid to developing countries; immigration and refugees; interest rates. The coding ranges from 4 (the international level), via 3 (World Region) and 2 (National) to 1 (Local). We also control for *Religiosity* (“Regardless of whether you belong to a particular religion, how religious would you say you are?” 0-not at all religious to 10-very religious); *Personal Safety* (“Have you or a member of your household been the victim of a burglary or assault in the last 5 years?” 1=Yes, 0=no); *Discriminated Minority* (“Would you describe yourself as being a member of a group that is discriminated against in this country?” 1=Yes, 0=No); *Economic Hardship* (“Which of the descriptions on this card comes closest to how you feel about your household’s income nowadays?” 1-Living comfortably on present income to 4-finding it very difficult on present income – and – “If for some reason you were in serious financial difficulties and had to borrow money to make ends meet, how difficult or easy would that

be?” 1=very difficult to 5=very easy); *Ideology* (“In politics people sometimes talk of “left” and “right.” Using this card, where would you place yourself on this scale?” 0=left to 10=right); *Gender* (1=male, 0=female), and *Age* (respondents’ reported year of birth was subtracted from 2003).

Two mediators were used in the analysis. The first one was *Cultural Threat*, coded 0 (cultural life enriched) to 10 (cultural life undermined) with respect to the question: “Would you say that [country]’s cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?” The second mediator was *Realistic Threat*: “Would you say that people who come to live here generally take jobs away from workers in [country], or generally help to create new jobs?” coded 0=create new jobs to 10=take jobs away. See Table 2A in the appendix for descriptive statistics.

In sum, our first set of analyses (time-series cross-sectional generalized estimating equations) examines support for our theory at the level of the country. The second set of analyses (mediation analyses) directly tests the theorized mechanism at the individual level.

Results

Results of both the time-series cross-sectional GEE models and the mediation analyses strongly corroborate our key hypothesis; the time series analysis shows that globalization depresses levels of religious freedom over time, and the mediation analysis shows that threat is the mechanism that drives the connection between globalization and support for religious and cultural homogeneity. Below we discuss the results of each set of analyses separately and then combine them to draw conclusions.

Time-Series Cross-Sectional Analysis

Which variables systematically influence legislation of a dominant religion into law and

religious discrimination against minorities? Table 1 lends strong support to the theoretical framework proposed in this paper. The effects on each of the dependent variables are tested using three different models. Model I tests the effect of overall globalization, while Model II tests for the effects of separate dimensions of globalization; Model III adds a variable tapping the number of minority religions in a country, in order to test H2 concerning the effect of the visibility of minority religions; Model IV adds additional controls to test for the robustness of our results.

[Insert Table 1 here]

Model I indicates that both religious legislation and religious discrimination towards minorities increase with overall levels of globalization. Model II unpacks the globalization index into its three components: social, economic and political. Both social and economic globalization have the hypothesized effects on the two indicators of religious freedom, while political globalization fails to reach standard levels of statistical significance. Note that social globalization is more than twice as influential on religious discrimination relative to religious legislation, while economic globalization has a similar effect on both dependent variables. Additional analyses, not reported in the table, demonstrate that the differential results for the three dimensions of globalization are fully replicated even when each dimension is specified in a separate model. Thus, when specified without the other two dimensions, social and economic globalization each has a positive and significant effect, whereas political globalization shows a positive but statistically insignificant effect on religious freedom.

As expected, the number of minority religions is positively related to religious legislation and religious discrimination, holding all else constant. That is, *ceteris paribus*, as the visibility of minority religions in a country increases, religious freedoms will be likewise

curbed. We also tested whether the degree of globalization moderates the relationship between the number of minority religions and religious freedoms; that is, if globalization intensifies the effect of minority religions on legislation and discrimination. To do so, we re-estimated Model I, adding minority religions and the interaction between minority religions and the weighted index of globalization. These interaction effects, however, were not statistically significant for either dependent variable.

Next, the denominational fractionalization variable has a robust and statistically significant effect on both dependent variables, as hypothesized. Higher levels of denominational fractionalization substantially decrease the likelihood of religious legislation and religious discrimination toward minorities. To test robustness, we reran the models with a denominational fractionalization measure calculated from denomination data provided by the RAS dataset, which has a number of additional denominational categories.¹³ These models yielded comparable results.

As for the control variables, the effect of democratic conditions on religious freedom is indistinguishable from zero. In line with Fox's contentions, we also find that even some of the most democratic countries restrict religious freedoms. The null finding for the effect of GDP per capita on religious discrimination runs counter to the predictions of modernization theory. Moreover, where religious legislation is concerned, the effect of GDP is statistically significant such that, *ceteris paribus*, the higher the GDP, the more religious legislation is observed.

The concentration of certain religious denominations in a nation also influences religious freedom. Overall, as the percent of Catholics in the population increases, an increase in freedom of religion is observed. Conversely, as the percent of Muslims in a country

increases, freedom of religion decreases. The greater the proportion of Muslims in the nation, the greater the likelihood of religious legislation and discrimination against minorities (Fox 2007a; Fox and Sandler 2005; Grim and Finke 2007). Having a post-communist heritage generally does not have a consistent effect on religious freedom, although in Model I it does appear to bring religious legislation down. Finally, as the size of the population increases, so does religious legislation in general, indicating a decrease in religious freedom (Cosgel and Miceli 2009; Fox 2007b).

Individual level Mediation Analysis

To test our reasoning that perceived threat is what links globalization to restrictions on religious freedom, we conducted a mediation analysis at the individual level. Table 2 shows the step-1 regression, in which attitudes towards globalization explain the level of opposition to three indicators of support for freedom of religion (support for homogenous culture, support for religious homogeneity, and opposition to religious diversity); the bottom rows of Table 2 present the mediation effects attributable to the two types of threat, cultural and realistic, and the corresponding Sobel significance tests.

[Insert Table 2 here]

Results of the mediation analysis show that opposition to globalization is a positive and statistically significant predictor of support for homogeneous culture, support for religious homogeneity, and opposition to religious diversity. Sobel tests confirm that perceived realistic and cultural threats mediate the effect of opposition to globalization on support for cultural and religious homogeneity and opposition to religious diversity. As the bottom row of Table 2 shows, an average of 36 % of the effect of opposition to globalization on support for religious freedom is mediated by cultural threat in all three models, and the effect is

statistically different from zero. Realistic threat also serves as a significant mediator, even if somewhat weaker, explaining 13 % of the effect on average. In sum, at the individual level, the mechanism that leads from globalization to support for curbs on religious freedom is to a large extent the sense of threat, with cultural threat playing a key role.

Discussion and Conclusions

The main goal of this paper was to develop a theory explaining the recent surge in religious restrictions and to empirically test its implications. Extrapolating the religious threat hypothesis (Campbell 2006), we argue that perceived threat induced by increasing globalization accounts for the recent worldwide rise in restrictions on the freedom of religion. Using time-series GEE models, we find that globalization systematically predicts increases in religious legislation and religious discrimination towards minorities. Social and economic globalization are especially important for the trend observed. The robustness of this result is demonstrated by using data from two independent sources, and by estimating two types of regression models at dissimilar levels of analysis, both producing consistent results.

In addition, results of the individual level mediation analyses provide supporting evidence for the argument that the key effect of globalization on religious restrictions occurs via threat perceptions, and suggests that the effect of globalization on support for freedom of religion at least partly stems from perceived threat. As predicted by Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979), it is threat to one's culture, norms and values that is the key to the depressing effect of globalization on religious freedom.

These results make several significant contributions to the literature. First, we complement existing theories by explaining religious legislation and discrimination over time, as well as across nations. Scholarship on religion in political science as well as in sister disciplines has

largely provided descriptive depictions of trends. Indeed, a few exceptions aside, most scholarship on the relationship between the state and religion either provides detailed historiographies, or focuses on specific case studies (Grim and Finke 2011; Gill 2008; Fox 2007b). The theoretical account provided here allows us to illuminate some fundamental questions concerning the origins and limits of religious freedoms. We believe that the theory of religious freedom provided here would take the discussion to a new level. We identify the threat perceived as emanating from others due to globalization to be a key variable explaining the trend towards increasing religious restrictions. This trend is important in its own right, but it is also related to several key political phenomena, including religious fundamentalism, religious terrorism, religious wars and other types of religious tensions. Thus, the analysis offered here helps to illuminate several of the most important political occurrences of recent decades (Giddens 2009).

Second, the evidence provided by time-series GEE models forms the most comprehensive large-N comparative examination of freedom of religion. The analyses also test for the effect of other factors that are argued to have a systematic effect on religious freedom; contrary to conventional wisdom, we find that neither democratization nor modernization guarantees religious freedoms. On the other hand, our results support the documented effect of denominational fractionalization on freedom of religion within a nation.

This work offers some important observations and empirical predictions to be developed and tested in the future. For example, we find that the dominance of certain religious traditions in a polity may be beneficial or detrimental to respect for religious freedoms. A large share of Catholics in a polity increases religious freedom, whereas when the proportion of Muslims increases, religious restrictions are likely to follow suit. Controlling for

democratic conditions and for percent Muslims in the nation, however, our results largely rule out the possibility that Islamist political expression or Muslim religious mobilization account for the shifts in our dependent variables.

Delving into this discrepancy between religious traditions, future work may theorize and explain how and why different religious traditions have different effects on freedom of religion. One example is discussions prevalent within many Muslim societies about the phenomenon of cultural, religious and other types of authenticity. As suggested in Misrepassi (2011), these discussions draw upon an anti-Enlightenment strand within western thought in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, for instance in the work of Nietzsche and Heidegger. Such scholarship developed as a reaction against the universalizing claims of modernity. Based on Misrepassi's analysis of the non-religious philosophical roots of the revolution in Iran, one could argue that the restrictions on religious freedom in many Muslim contexts today result not only from heightened globalization, but also from this discourse. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to fully develop this line of argumentation, if this discourse about religio-cultural authenticity more important and prevalent among Muslims than Catholics, this might help shed light on the discrepancy we find between the two denominations. Future research may be able to examine whether, in Muslim polities, the external factor of globalization is actually complemented by the internal factor of a discourse that emphasizes authenticity.

In addition, our over-time aggregate-level analysis was restricted by the database to the time period of 1990-2002. Future work could build on additional data to generalize the influence of globalization on religious freedom, and also determine the extent to which this relationship is unique to the contemporary globalization process.

Finally, the effect of globalization may extend beyond trends towards limiting freedom of religion. Buffers against threats resulting from globalization may be found in places other than restrictions on religious freedom. For instance, similar effects may be observed among nationalistic trends – with globalization leading to movement in a nationalistic direction. Those contentions may be further developed and tested in future work.

Tables

Table 1: Cross-Sectional Time-Series Analysis of Predictors of Religious Freedom 1990-2002

	Religious legislation				Religious discrimination toward minorities			
	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV
Globalization scale	.031 (.010)***	-	-	-	.032 (.016)**	-	-	-
Social globalization	-	.012 (.007)*	.012 (.007)*	.012 (.007)*	-	.027 (.013)**	.027 (.013)**	.027 (.013)**
Economic globalization	-	.017 (.007)**	.017 (.007)**	.018 (.007)**	-	.019 (.008)**	.020 (.008)**	.021 (.009)**
Political globalization	-	.006 (.005)	.006 (.005)	.006 (.005)	-	-.006 (.005)	-.005 (.005)	-.006 (.005)
Number of minority religions	-	-	.021 (.011)**	.029 (.012)**	-	-	.022 (.010)**	.026 (.010)***
Denominational fractionalization	-.312 (.042)***	-.298 (.046)***	-.384 (.058)***	-.424 (.058)***	-.209 (.064)***	-.119 (.037)***	-.208 (.056)***	-.217 (.054)***
Democratic conditions (FH/Polity)	.017 (.025)	.014 (.030)	.014 (.030)	.023 (.031)	-.039 (.031)	-.050 (.031)	-.048 (.031)	-.064 (.030)**
GDP in real \$s (logged)	.008 (.003)**	.008 (.003)**	.008 (.003)**	.008 (.004)**	.002 (.004)	.001 (.003)	.002 (.003)	.003 (.004)
Percent Catholics	-.001 (.000)***	-.001 (.000)***	-.001 (.000)***	-.001 (.000)***	-.002 (.000)***	-.001 (.000)***	-.001 (.000)***	-.001 (.000)***
Percent Orthodox	.000 (.000)	.000 (.000)	.000 (.000)	.000 (.000)	.001 (.001)	.001 (.001)*	.001 (.000)**	.001 (.001)**
Percent Protestants	.0001 (.000)	.000 (.000)	.000 (.000)	.000 (.000)	-.001 (.000)**	-.001 (.000)**	-.001 (.000)*	-.001 (.000)*
Percent Muslims	.003 (.001)***	.002 (.001)***	.002 (.001)***	.002 (.000)***	.001 (.001)*	.001 (.001)*	.001 (.001)*	.001 (.001)*
Post-communist	-.053 (.029)*	-.040 (.027)	-.039 (.026)	-.032 (.028)	.011 (.032)	.026 (.022)	.026 (.021)	.032 (.022)
Population (logged)	.005 (.003)*	.006 (.003)**	.007 (.003)**	.005 (.005)	.010 (.006)	.014 (.005)***	.015 (.005)***	.018 (.007)**
Population Increase rate	-	-	-	.000 (.004)	-	-	-	-.011 (.006)*
GDP growth rate	-	-	-	.000 (.000)	-	-	-	.000 (.000)
Armed Conflicts	-	-	-	.001 (.000)	-	-	-	-.001 (.001)
Religious freedom in constitution	-	-	-	.024 (.027)	-	-	-	.006 (.032)
Migration: Muslims	-	-	-	.000 (.000)*	-	-	-	.000 (.000)**
Migration: Catholics	-	-	-	.000 (.000)***	-	-	-	.000 (.000)
Migration: Orthodox	-	-	-	.000 (.000)	-	-	-	.000 (.000)*
Migration: Protestants	-	-	-	.000 (.000)***	-	-	-	.000 (.000)
Migration: Buddhists	-	-	-	.000 (.000)	-	-	-	.000 (.000)***
Migration: Hindu	-	-	-	.000 (.000)	-	-	-	.000 (.000)
Migration: Jewish	-	-	-	.000 (.000)	-	-	-	.000 (.000)
Migration: Other	-	-	-	.000 (.000)	-	-	-	.000 (.000)
Migration: Unaffiliated	-	-	-	.000 (.000)**	-	-	-	.000 (.000)
Constant	.226 (.053)***	.195 (.063)***	.190 (.062)***	.178 (.078)**	.134 (.091)	.000 (.058)	-.011 (.060)	-.058 (.071)
N	1878	1710	1710	1666	1878	1710	1710	1666
Number of groups	147	134	134	132	147	134	134	132
Obs per group: min/avg/max	8/12.8/13	8/12.8/13	8/12.8/13	8/12.6/13	8/12.8/13	8/12.8/13	8/12.8/13	8/12.6/13

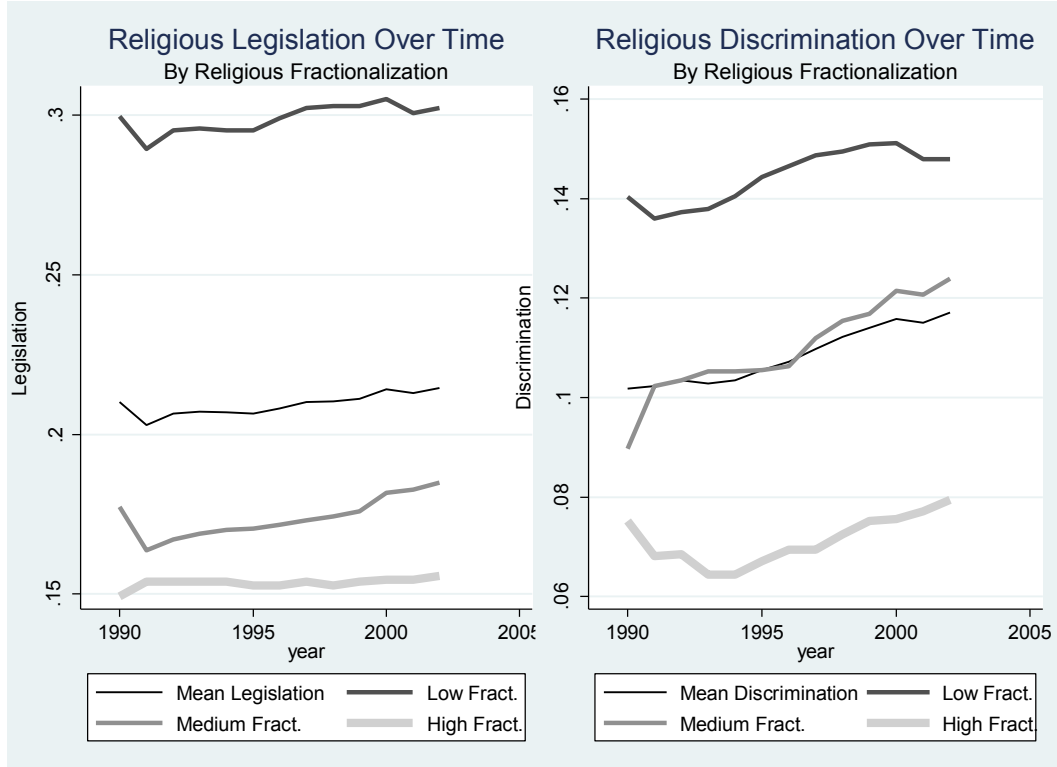
*** two tail 99% level of confidence, ** 95%, *90%.

Table 2: The effect of attitude toward globalization on support for freedom of religion, and the mediating effect of cultural and realistic threat

	Support for homogenous culture	Support for religious homogeneity	Opposition to religious diversity
Opposes globalization	.135 (.009)***	.104 (.010)***	.092 (.009)***
Religiosity	.065 (.006)***	.287 (.007)***	.023 (.006)***
Personal safety	-.013 (.004)***	-.034 (.004)***	-.018 (.004)***
Discriminated minority	-.031 (.007)***	-.014 (.008)**	-.041 (.007)***
Economic hardship	.185 (.007)***	.173 (.007)***	.067 (.007)***
Ideology	.158 (.008)***	.235 (.009)***	.130 (.008)***
Gender	.039 (.003)***	.012 (.004)***	.019 (.003)***
Age	.002 (.000)***	.003 (.000)***	.001 (.000)***
Constant	.629 (.010)***	-.033 (.010)***	.414 (.009)***
Mediation by cultural threat	Percent of total effect mediated = 37.4% p(sobel)=.000	Percent of total effect mediated = 27.6% p(sobel)=.000	Percent of total effect mediated = 41.7% p(sobel)=.000
Mediation by realistic threat	Percent of total effect mediated = 14.7% p(sobel)=.000	Percent of total effect mediated = 8.9% p(sobel)=.000	Percent of total effect mediated = 14.1% p(sobel)=.000
N	25899	25812	25666

Entries are unstandardized OLS coefficients and standard errors. *** two tail 99% level of confidence, ** 95%, *90%. The estimate and significance test for the mediation results come from a Sobel test (similar p values in a Goodman-2 test).

Figure 1: Religious Legislation and Discrimination over time, broken down into Low (0-33%), Medium (33%-66%), and High (66%+) Religious Fractionalization



Appendix

Table 1A: Descriptive Statistics for the Cross Sectional Time Series Analysis (Table 1)

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Religious legislation	.209	.171	0	.844
Religious discrimination toward minorities	.109	.154	0	.792
Globalization scale	.485	.170	.088	.935
Social globalization	.457	.210	.028	.944
Economic globalization	.491	.188	.087	.987
Political globalization	.481	.247	.016	.988
Denominational fractionalization	.448	.233	.016	.848
Number of minority religions	1.711	1.201	0	4
Democratic Conditions (Freedom House/Polity)	.055	.035	0	0.1
GDP in real \$s (logged)	8.243	1.123	5.139	11.343
Percent Catholics	26.242	33.545	0	99
Percent Orthodox	6.749	19.449	0	93
Percent Protestants	13.468	21.891	0	99
Percent Muslims	15.988	30.942	0	99
Post communist country	.160	.367	0	1
Population (logged)	8.450	2.110	1.730	14.061

All variables were coded to vary 0–1, with the exception of number of minority religions (0-4), GDP and population size (logged), and percent religious (0-100).

Table 2A: Descriptive Statistics for the Mediation Analysis (Table 2)

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Support for homogenous culture	.599	.277	0	1
Support for religious homogeneity	.366	.325	0	1
Opposition to religious diversity	.499	.264	0	1
Opposes globalization	.596	.177	0	1
Religiosity	.494	.294	0	1
Personal safety	.211	.408	0	1
Discriminated minority	.059	.236	0	1
Economic hardship	.421	.252	0	1
Ideology	.507	.219	0	1
Gender	.476	.499	0	1
Age	47.996	17.898	18	110
Cultural threat	.424	.247	0	1
Realistic threat	.553	.227	0	1

All variables were coded to vary 0–1, with the exception of age (in years).

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US state department website - <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/index.htm>

¹ According to The US Department of State International Religious Freedom Report of 2010, China maintains tight control over religious leaders and religious gatherings as well as its bans on many sects. It has also been reported that the government considers several Protestant Christian groups to be "evil cults". In Iran, government rhetoric and actions create a threatening atmosphere for all non-Shia religious groups, most notably for Baha'is, as well as Sufi Muslims, evangelical Christians and members of the Jewish community. The report also mentions that government imprisonment, harassment, intimidation, and discrimination based on religious beliefs continue. The Belarus government enforces laws that limit freedom of worship, speech, and assembly, and regularly fails to condemn acts of religious insensitivity or intolerance. Christian as well as Islamic groups in Burma face widespread discrimination and the restriction of their activities by the government.

² For more information on the religious discrimination towards minorities measure developed by the Religion and State (RAS) dataset, see Fox 2008.

³ Evidence again comes from RAS dataset. Democratic and non-democratic nations are classified according to Freedom House criteria.

⁴ The time period under study here is dictated more by the data available from the RAS project (1990-2002) than theoretical constraints. Still, this is also the period in which globalization has accelerated: the index of globalization (Dreher et al. 2006 2008) remained fairly stable during the 1980-1990 period but shows a dramatic increase starting from 1990.

⁵ While trade and financial flows has been on the rise since the 1970s, some argue that globalization is not an unprecedented phenomenon (Hirst and Thompson 1999, Williamson 1996). Yet, current levels of globalization in the world economy are different in terms of the volume of trade and financial flows involved, the intensity of these interactions, and the key role of information and communication technologies and the consequent explosion in information flows (Giddens 2002). In the globalized world of today, citizens of different nations are more aware of each other than ever in the past.

⁶ For a more detailed review of the measures, see Fox (2008, chapter 3).

⁷ Rescaling variables to vary 0-1 is a standardization technique, which allows comparing the effect size of independent variables of different units. It is computed using the formula [New value = (value-min)/(max-min)], which allows variables to have differing means and standard deviations but equal ranges. As mentioned in the text, to facilitate interpretation, we also reversed the scales where appropriate.

⁸ Catholic, Protestant, Other Christian, Orthodox, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Eastern Religions, Other Religions, and Non-religious

⁹ See Alesina et al. (2003) for calculation of ethnic, religious and linguistic fractionalization; see Cosgel and Miceli (2009) and Grim and Finke (2007) who have utilized the same measure in their work

¹⁰ Hadenius and Teorell (2005) show that this index performs better both in terms of validity and reliability than its constituent parts.

¹¹ Mediation analysis is a conventional procedure in which the percentage of the mediation (in this case, values) out of the total effect of the main independent variable (attitude about globalization) on the dependent variable (religious freedom) is examined by estimating the relative effect of the main independent variable when the mediator is specified and unspecified in the regression, and calculating a significance test of the change (see also Baron and Kenny 1986).

¹² Some questionnaires were answered face-to-face and some via telephone interviews. Respondents who are foreign-born or those who are younger than 18 years of age were excluded. More details on the survey and survey design can be found on the ESS website.

¹³ These are Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran, Pentacostalist, Methodist, Baptist, Other Protestant, Other Christian denominations, Sunni, Shii, Other Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Animist, Confucian, Sikh, Bahai, Other, and Non-Religious.