Globalization, Threat and Religious Freedom

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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 Myanmar[1], may not come as a surprise, as the examples from France and Belgium illustrate, the 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, 2007; 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 by 11.4% between 1990 and 2002 (Fox, 2007).[2] Legislation of religion into law and active discrimination against minority religious groups became commonplace in a number of nations during this period (Fox, 2007). The comparison of recent reports published by Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life shows that these trends continued in the second half of the 2000s (e.g. Pew Forum, 2009; 2011). In fact, the number of countries that interfered with worship or other religious practices, as well as the number of countries that regulate religious symbols, religious literature, or broadcasting, has increased between 2006 and 2009. As of August 2011, some 59% of the world's population lives with high or very high government restrictions on religion, and more than half of the world's countries include stipulations in their constitutions or basic laws that substantially contradict the concept of religious freedom (Pew Forum, 2011).

As religious communities have long defined themselves against each other, the genre of polemics against other religions is ancient and has had many political consequences (e.g., Nicholson, 2007). This paper's contribution lies in its attempt to *explain* the global trend of rising levels of restrictions on religious freedoms, focusing empirically on the period between 1990 and 2002.[3] We suggest that globalization plays an important role in the rise in levels of religious legislation and discrimination against minority religions observed in recent decades. The growing integration of economies, cultural interactions, and contact between people of different traditions challenge existing value systems and norms, raising perceived threat levels. 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 at two levels of analysis with data from two independent sources. First, an aggregate level time series model tests the effect of globalization on religious freedom over time. However, aggregate level data offers no direct measure of perceived threat. Thus, to provide supporting evidence 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 shows that restrictions on freedom of religion have been on the rise over time—yet, there is a real paucity of theories explaining these recent trends. Earlier research has generally focused on the effects of religious deregulation on religious commitment and religious activity (Finke and Stark, 1992; Iannaccone, 1991), and recent work investigates structural antecedents of state religion (Barro and McCleary, 2005), religious legislation (Cosgel and Miceli, 2009), religious freedom (Gill, 2008), and religious persecution (Grim and Finke, 2007, 2011) across nations. While these studies contribute to explaining cross-national variations in freedom of religion, they do not account for changes in levels of religious freedom over time.

This paper is designed to fill this gap. We argue that globalization induces perceived threat to a hegemonic religion, which leads to more restrictions on religious freedom. By increasing the 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 few decades (Fox, 2007; Kinnvall, 2004).[4] 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 permits the exchange not only 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).

On the one hand, some scholars argue that globalization leads to more rights and freedoms by diffusing the ideals of freedom and democracy (Fukuyama, 1992; Tsutsui and Wotipka, 2004) or forcing states to adopt norms of rights and freedoms in response to increasing international pressures (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998). Yet, increasing levels of communication and interaction between societies also increasingly challenge existing traditions, values, and identities (Arnett, 2002; Barber, 1992), which we argue leads to perceptions of increased threat from other cultures and religions.

Globalization has increased interpersonal contact 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 the spread of commodities with symbolic cultural value, such as products of multinational companies (e.g., IKEA) and global food chains (e.g., McDonald's and 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 (Hermans and DiMaggio, 2007:33; Kochler, 2004:2), 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 a 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 district. 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 of a threat it seems to pose to one's way of life and values and to the in-group. Our theoretical framework expands the religious threat hypothesis beyond the American context (Campbell, 2006, 2007; Putnam and Campbell, 2010). 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 (Ben-Nun Bloom and Arikan, 2012; Wald and Smidt, 1993). 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 (Kinder and Sears, 1981; Tajfel and Turner, 1979), 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 (Branscombe, 2002; Brown, 2000; Fetzer, 2000; Flippen et al., 1996; Lahav, 2004; Lewis, 2005; Postmes and Gibson, 2002). It has been shown that perceived threat is a significant factor in the emergence of prejudice (Stephan and Stephan, 2001), ethnocentrism (Levine and Campbell, 1972; Struch and Schwartz, 1989), exclusionism (Shamir and Sullivan, 1985; Stephan and Stephan, 2001), opposition to immigration (Fetzer, 2000; Sniderman, Hagendoorn and Prior, 2004; Stephan et al., 1998; Wilson, 2001), opposition to bussing and policies aiding African Americans in the United States (Bobo, 1983; Branton and Jones, 2005); and negative attitudes towards Muslims by Western

Europeans (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 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 Pyszcynski, 1991). Increased cultural contact brought on by globalization increases awareness of the plurality of religions, which challenges traditions legitimating religious identity (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). A politicized religion tends to depict one's group as homogeneous, and to gloss 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, 2007) 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 facing a nation increases, we expect to witness a depressing effect on the freedom of religion.

H_1 - 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 religious freedom, globalization is a multidimensional phenomenon with economic, social and political aspects. Social globalization constitutes the greatest alleged threat to national cultures, 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 (e.g. Wallerstein, 2001). Political globalization is expected to have a weaker effect; citizens of a country are rarely aware of increasing political proximity between nations, unless highly 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.

While we argue that globalization decreases religious freedom via heightening threat perceptions, we acknowledge that other factors that are internal to the country's political system may also be consequential, such as the legal framework in the country and social restrictions on religion (Grim, 2012). Perceived threat to the majority religion may also be related to internal societal dynamics, such as the visibility of minority religions. In a country, the traditions legitimating religious identity and homogeneity 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 limitations on religious freedom.

H_2 - 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). 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. Despite the fact that many scholars see Islam as a threat to democracy (Stepan, 2000), some others argue that Islam, secularism, and liberal democracy are not necessarily irreconcilable (e.g., Hashemi, 2009). For example, the *dhimma* contract, which is a part of sharia law, prescribes rights, protections and equality under the law to non-Muslim subjects of a Muslim state. Moreover, as in most religious traditions, there are a variety of worldviews in the Islamic tradition. On the other hand, empirical analyses still find Muslim nations to be more discriminating against other religious minorities (Fox, 2007; Grim and Finke, 2007). Yet, this is not necessarily because of Islamic political thought but may be because of societal dynamics in predominantly Muslim nations. 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 and, consequently, respondents in Muslim

countries tend to display greater support for a strong societal role by religious authorities compared to respondents from Western nations (Grim and Finke, 2007:652-653). In turn, regulation of social affairs by religious leaders increases the chances of greater religious restrictions. In addition, social regulation of religion, that is, restrictions placed on other religious groups, tends to be higher in Muslim nations (Grim and Finke, 2007), which again is expected to increase regulations and restrictions on the practice of other religions. Thus, we expect to find overall 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 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 – a time-series cross-sectional Generalized Estimating Equation (GEE)[5] analysis at the country level, and a 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, which includes a set of measures used to systematically gauge the intersection between government and religion. We use two common measures of religious freedom. *Religious legislation* is the first dependent variable, which ranges from 0 (no religious legislation) to 32 (all types of religious legislation are present, including but not limited to dietary laws, restrictions or prohibitions on the sale of alcoholic beverages, personal status being defined by clergy, laws of inheritance being defined by religion, restrictions on conversions away form the dominant religion, restrictions on interfaith marriages and public dress, blasphemy laws, censorship on anti-religious grounds, restrictions on businesses on holidays, and religious education in public schools). This variable 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, measuring the extent of restrictions on the practice of religion towards minorities. The variable ranges from 0 (no restrictions on minorities) to 48 (including: minorities being prohibited or sharply restricted from public observance of religious services and building and maintaining places of worship; being forced to observe religious laws of other groups; minorities' religious organizations being restricted; religious education being restricted; arrest or harassment of religious figures; restrictions on the ability to make materials necessary for religious rites; restrictions on the ability to write, disseminate, or publish religious material; restrictions on the observance of religious laws concerning personal status; forced conversions; restrictions on proselytizing; and a requirement for members of minority religions to register in order to be legal or receive special tax status).[6] While the two variables are qualitatively different from each other, we

believe that they measure complementary dimensions of control over and restrictions placed on the free exercise of religion in a nation. Religious discrimination towards minority religions is a more direct measure tapping the absence of religious freedoms for minority groups in a country. Religious legislation, on the other hand, taps laws and government practices influenced by religion that significantly curb the free exercise of religion, especially by religious minorities. For instance, religious education in public schools (with no possibility of opting out) may place pressure on the adherents of minority religions since the curriculum is likely to emphasize the teachings and practices of the dominant religion. Other examples of restrictions in this category that are likely to restrain religious minorities are restrictions on interfaith marriages, restrictions on speech about religion and religious figures, and censorship of the press on religious grounds.

To facilitate interpretation by allowing a comparison of effect sizes, both dependent variables are recoded to vary between 0 and 1. Higher values were coded to indicate higher levels of regulation and discrimination.[7] 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 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* is calculated as 1 minus the Herfindahl index of denomination shares[8] 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 the Freedom House and Polity scales into 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 Online Appendix for descriptive statistics).

We use time-series cross-sectional data, listing all countries 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 Homogeneous 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: (1) *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?"; (2) *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 Online Appendix for descriptive statistics.

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

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.

Time-Series Cross-Sectional Analysis

Which variables systematically influence legislation of a dominant religion 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 for the effect of overall globalization, Model II tests for the effects of separate dimensions of globalization, and Model III adds a variable tapping the number of minority religions in a country, in order to test H_2 concerning the effect of the visibility of minority religions.

[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 integrated 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 religions 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, such that 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 globalization according to the weighted index. 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 (2008a) 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, the greater the proportion of Muslims in the nation, the greater the likelihood of religious legislation and discrimination against minorities (Fox, 2007; 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, 2008a).

To further test the robustness of our results, we integrated three additional groups of controls: (1) whether the constitution includes stipulations that run counter to the concept of religious freedom (Pew Forum 2011); (2) controls for the denominational composition of migration influx into a country (number of Muslims, Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants, Buddhists, Hindu, Jewish, Other, and unaffiliated immigrants coming in the country; Global Religion and Migration Database); (3) population increase rate (UN data), GDP growth rate (UN data), and the number of armed conflicts in a country (Uppsala Conflict Data Program). These additional controls did not affect any of our key findings, with social globalization, economic globalization, and the number of minority religions all positively and significantly related to religious legislation and religious discrimination, holding all else constant (see Model IV in Online Appendix Table A3 for full results, cf. Model III).

Individual-level Mediation Analysis

To test our reasoning that it is perceived threat that 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 homogeneous 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.

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 stems at least partly 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 and related disciplines has largely provided descriptive depictions of trends or has focused on specific case studies (Gill, 2008). The theoretical account provided here allows us to illuminate some fundamental questions concerning the origins and limits of religious freedoms and to take the scholarly discussion to a new level. We identify the threat perceived as emanating from other people 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 (see Giddens, 2009).

Second, the evidence provided by time-series GEE models forms the most comprehensive large-N comparative examination of freedom of religion that we are aware of. 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 the percentage of 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. For example, some scholars suggests that the hostility of Islam towards democratic ideas or institutions may be because of the influence of Western philosophers in the anti-enlightenment tradition (Misrepassi, 2011). Based on Misrepassi's (2011) 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 the anti-enlightenment and anti-Western strand of thought in Muslim countries. If this discourse about religio-cultural authenticity is more prevalent among Muslim than, for example, Catholic nations, this might help explain the discrepancy found between the two denominations. Future research may 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 elsewhere than in 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 could be further developed and tested in future work.

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[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 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 in the Religion and State (RAS) dataset, see Fox, 2008.

[3] The time period under study here is dictated more by the data available from the RAS project (1990-2002) than by theoretical constraints. Still, this is also a period in which globalization 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.

[4] 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.

[5] GEE is a semi-parametric extension of GLM to longitudinal data analysis using quasi-likelihood estimation. Given our use of repeated measures over time, we define the correlational structure to be auto-regressive with lag 1.

[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, 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 also 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 were 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, Baha'i, Other, and Non-Religious.