

**Islam and global governance
Orientations towards the United Nations and Human Rights
among four Islamic societies and four Western**

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**Thorleif Pettersson
Center for Multiethnic research
Uppsala University
P.O Box 514
SE-751 20 Uppsala
Sweden
e-Mail: Thorleif.Pettersson@teol.uu.se**

Islam and global governance.
A comparative analysis of orientations towards the United Nations and Human Rights among four Islamic societies and four Western

In contemporary globalized society, religious factors are said to be increasingly important to international politics (see e.g. Dark 2000; Millenium 2000; Tibi 2001, Cox 2002). One reason for the surge of religious factors in world politics is that the end of the Cold War was followed by a number of different conflicts which were imbued with religious ingredients (Tibi 2001: 24). In order to understand the role of religion in these events, comparative studies are needed. Disregarding whether Islamist movements will gain in importance and/or their anti-Western dimension is primarily explained by religio-cultural incompatibility between Islam and the West, it is therefore of interest to consider occurrences also in the Islamic world in investigations of the role of religious factors in international politics. This paper will discuss only one, very specific dimension of these developments, namely the relations between Islamic countries and the United Nations. In this regard, the results from a new set of interesting comparative data will be presented.

Specific Islamic orientations towards the UN?

It is often assumed that Islamic countries tend to hold a different view on the UN in comparison to the Western world. Specific Islamic views on human rights and the freedom of religion have been mentioned as one cause, and in this regard it has been suggested that Islamic countries stand outside the international consensus (Boyle 1999: 385). Particularly in the case of the status of women and the rights of non-Muslims, sharia requirements are said to be incompatible with most international human rights agreements (Price 2000: 161; Weiss et al. 1997: 191). Thus, one may assume that in societies where Islam is the major religion, the UN as safeguard of women rights and freedom of religion is seen as too secularized. Militant Islamist groups have e.g. depicted the UN as serving only atheist forces (Mustafa 2002: 105). However, in these matters “one should not speak about ‘Islam’ and human rights as if Islam were a monolith or as if there existed one established Islamic human rights philosophy that caused all Muslims to look at rights in a particular way” (Mayer 1999:xi). For instance, even if some Islamic countries have not ratified parts of the Human Rights conventions, one should also note that Muslim countries hardly have poorer records in these regards than non-Muslim countries, including e.g. the U.S. and the Vatican (Mayer 1999: 11). And should the religious leadership in some Islamic countries be negative towards the UN for these reasons, this does not exclude internal Muslim opposition in these matters. In such societies, there are usually camps arguing in favor of closer relations to the West and the

UN system (cf. Hjärpe 2002).

Furthermore, should Muslim societies hold different orientations towards the UN in comparison to the West, this need evidently not be caused by religious factors. In stead, there may be political reasons for scepticism towards the UN, for instance in relation to negatively perceived UN interventions in the Arab-Israeli conflict and more recently the Bosnia-Serbia conflict (Mustafa 2002: 96ff). There may also be other reasons such as the degree of education, literacy, colonial legacy, international trade, international political economy, secularization, globalization, nationalism, state structure, etc. (cf. Price 2000; al-Braizat 2002). As a matter of fact, after controls for such factors, it has been concluded that despite “all the doctrinal and theoretical differences between Islamic law and international law regarding Human Rights, Islamic countries still uphold roughly the same standards (or lack of standards) as other developing countries” (Price 2000: 174).

Thus, there are both inter- and intra-national differences among the Islamic societies with regard to the correlates of their religious and political outlooks. For instance, a recent comparative analysis of grass-root religious involvement Egypt, Jordan, and Iran documented noticeable differences in these regards. The Iranians placed less emphasis on religion than the Egyptians and the Jordanians. This fact was explained by the fact that in Iran, a theocracy dominates the socio-political order, and that opposition groups often are formulated in reaction towards this regime. Therefore, the Iranians’ withdrawal from religious involvement can be understood as a token of political opposition (Moaddel and Azadarmaki 2000: 26). Among the three countries, Iran also showed the lowest percentage claiming cultural invasion from the West to be a serious problem. Another interesting finding was that in Iran, it was predominantly older people and people with less education who scored highest on religious commitment. Increased education may therefore be an important factor changing Islamic convictions and value priorities. In these regards, the Islamic pattern does not seem to differ much from the Western (see e.g. Inglehart 1990, 1997).

In addition, there are also reasons to assume the citizens in the Islamic and the Western countries to be similar in their orientations towards the UN. Assuming that their views constitute part of the political culture, it is of considerable interest to note that Islam does not seem to be related to any specific kind of such culture at the individual grass-root level. “Political culture and more specifically democratic culture variables failed to distinguish Islam from the Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox or Hindu worlds. These cultures are not related in any significant way to political tolerance, support for freedom, participation or search for alternatives to the democratic system” (Esmer 2002: 17). Thus, if there is a difference

between Islamic and Western cultures at the grass-root level, this difference has been said to concern “Eros far more than Demos” (Norris and Inglehart 2000). Another analysis concluded that there is little evidence from various analyses of individual level data that Islam and democracy are incompatible (Tessler 2002: 19). And yet another comparative analysis found that “Islam is not the cause of the lack of democracy in predominantly Muslim countries” (Price 2000: 153). To the degree that orientations towards the UN are shaped by the political and democratic culture of a country, these findings suggest that Islamic societies should not differ from the West in their orientations towards the UN.

In summary, it can therefore be concluded that neither the Islamic societies as such, nor the citizens within these societies, should be regarded as homogenous in their religious and political attitudes, including their orientations towards the UN and Human Rights. The assumption that there would be a common Islamic denominator behind these orientations, can therefore be questioned. This paper will present some new empirical support for this view.

Why study peoples’ orientations towards the United Nations?

One may of course wonder why grass-root orientations towards the UN are of interest. In this regard, it may for instance be noted that when the UN and its Secretary-General Kofi Annan were awarded the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize, the motivation for the award said that the end of the Cold War “has at last made it possible for the U.N. to perform more fully the part it was originally intended to play. Today the organization is at the forefront of efforts to achieve peace and security in the world, and of the international mobilization aimed at meeting the world's economic, social and environmental challenges”. The critical researcher may in turn ask whether this is a fully adequate description of the UN system or not. On the one hand, it has been concluded that during the last few years, there has “unquestionably been a new dynamics associated with the new leadership of Kofi Annan” (Hettne 2002: 21). There is also systematic evidence that the contemporary UN is the “prime global mechanism for simultaneously maintaining historic patterns and absorbing profound changes” (Rosenau 1997: 389). In this task, the UN has been said to persist and even in some respects to thrive (ibid). The increased importance of the UN since the end of the Cold War is for instance illustrated by the fact that in 1987, the UN assigned about 10.000 peace-keepers to 5 operations on an annual budget of 233 millions USD. Seven years later in 1994, the number of troops rose to 72.000 peace-keepers in 18 different operations at an annual budget of more than 53 billions USD. Furthermore, during the mid-eighties, the Security Council met on a monthly basis, while 10 years later, it used to meet on an almost daily schedule (Rosenau and

Durfee 2000: 154), and the resolutions of the Security Council had increased sharply (Wallensteen 1994: 243).

On the other hand, this growth does not necessarily indicate that the UN has become more successful in the operation of international affairs and global governance. To the contrary, there are reasons to suggest the opposite. Even if the UN in theory is an umbrella organization for global governance, its actual role in this task has been said to be rather “limited, with the exception of some peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations, and development programmes” (Väyrinen 2002: 122). In Kofi Annan’s own words, there is still a gap between aspiration and accomplishment. The many political demands for a reformed UN point in the same direction. Therefore, even if the UN in the words of the Norwegian Nobel Peace Prize Committee is at the forefront for the mobilization of resources for global development, this forefront may not in every respect be an undeniable success.

In order to understand the many factors which influence whether the UN system is successful or not, it is of course tempting to look at the research being done on the UN. In this regard, it has however been concluded that the “United Nations has always been inhibited from fulfilling its programmes and goals because the scientific talent of the world is largely at the service of large corporations and powerful states ... Even research that is focused on ‘foreign affairs’ and global problems tends to concentrate on state interests and contributes little to knowledge needs of the UN system. In particular, in research on global problems there is a glaring neglect of the actual programmes and potential contributions of UN organizations” (Alger 1995: 33f).

If there is a general lack of studies on the UN, the same can be said with regard to the more restricted field of peoples’ orientations towards this organization for global governance. A review of sch research summarized the findings by saying that the point to be emphasized is “the inadequacy of the available data” (Everts 1998: 422). As far as I know, this lack of thorough studies of peoples’ orientations towards the UN remains. Therefore, it can still be concluded that “a comprehensive study of attitudes towards the United Nations is imperative” (Everts 1998: 423).

In summary, then, it can be concluded that in the increasingly globalized world, where the national and international become ever more interdependent and intertwined, the demands for efficient organizations for the handling of international affairs have grown, at the same time as the research on one of the potentially most important organizations for such affairs – the UN – has been rather weak. This also holds for peoples’ orientations towards the UN. In this

regard, it is debated whether there are specific Muslim views on the UN, not the least in relation to the Human Rights. In order to shed further light on these issues, this paper will report on a cross-cultural comparison of attitudes towards the UN in a group of Islamic and Western societies. Since there are reasons to assume religious factors to become increasingly important issues in international affairs, such a report may hopefully be of certain interest.

Do peoples' orientations towards the UN matter?

At first sight, it may seem misplaced to connect a system for global governance like the UN to the religious orientations of ordinary citizens. However, this is a much disputed matter in IR theory, which is now slowly dividing between state-centric approaches and approaches which are inclined to accept a greater complexity in global affairs (Ferguson 2001).

According to realist theory, the state is the primary actor and the principal unit of analysis, and other actors are seen as less significant. Mass publics are taken for granted and assumed ready to submit to state leadership in international politics. Liberal or interdependence theory grants the citizens a certain role, especially with regard to the ways their multiple interests generate collective action, which may have an impact on state activities in international matters. Postinternationalist theory at the other end of the spectrum is determinedly non-state-centric, and regards individuals as central, and assume their skills and world views to have a substantial impact on international politics. According to this theory, "macro collectivities and institutions derive their sustenance from the individuals they embrace" (Rosenau and Durfee 2000: 81). Therefore, "any transformation at the micro level is bound to find expression in the aggregated dynamics that give shape and direction to global life" (ibid).

Due to the increased interest in postinternationalist IR theory, a swing of the pendulum towards culture and identity is said to be "strikingly evident in post-Cold War IR theorizing" (Lapid 1996: 3). The swing even includes religious beliefs and values as an intrinsic aspect of international relations (Dark 2000: VII; Tibi 2002). In this sense, new developments in IR theory have extended both the number and kinds of actors who play a key role for global governance, and among the key actors are now found both individuals and mass publics (Rosenau 1997: 275-311; Sinnott 1998). Due to the expanded systems for public education and peoples' increased political skills, "people have become increasingly more competent in assessing where they fit in international affairs and how their behavior can be aggregated into significant collective outcomes" (Rosenau 1997: 59). The concept of citizenship is changing and cosmopolitan orientations have become increasingly common.

The thesis that individual level value orientations are important to world affairs is based on three equally important premises. “One is that citizens have become more analytically and emotionally skillful and a second is that this skill revolution at the micro level matters, that through perceptual and aggregate processes citizens are shaping macro outcomes more extensively than they have in the past. The third is the presumption that the macro system of world politics has entered a period of prolonged turbulence that is especially vulnerable to micro inputs” (Rosenau 1997: 279f). Thus, peoples’ competence in international affairs has increased, and because of the enhanced turbulence in the system for world politics, the system has become more liable to peoples’ efforts to influence the system. Therefore, in order to reach a proper understanding of the multi-faceted phenomenon of global governance, peoples’ value orientations and religious convictions should be considered. Although mass publics may not know much about the many detailed aspects of The International Food Regime, the Law of Sea, or even the UN, these regimes can be related to a set of so called diffuse values, which enable their creation and persistence. The principle of sovereignty and the notion of exclusive control within a specific territorial area are examples of such diffuse values. Even if the main repository for such diffuse values may be various international institutions, they also “exist in a broad cultural milieu *of which public opinion is a part*” (Sinnott 1998: 26, italics added). By such arguments, interesting theoretical linkages between peoples’ value orientations and various institutions for internationalized governance can be established.

Thus, it can be concluded that “far from regarding public opinion as something remote and irrelevant, regime theory, particularly in its more recent manifestations, strongly implies that domestic public opinion may impel or constrain moves towards internationalized governance” (Sinnott 1998: 29). It may also be argued that the more peoples’ orientations towards internationalized governance relate to their deeply held values, the more likely the impact of these orientations on international politics. Consequently, in order to assess the importance of public opinion with regard to an organization for internationalized governance, the relationship between peoples’ orientations towards that organization and their basic values and religious convictions becomes a key issue. The stronger the relationship, the more influential their orientations may be. However, it should also be noted that such relationships do not automatically yield the formation of publics which can bring about change in the systems for global governance. “Individuals are restless, their loyalties are in flux; their inclinations to shift into apathetic, self-centered, ideological, or democratic forms of citizenship have been intensified; but how and why these tendencies among individuals have been transformed into spontaneous and effective publics is not easily explained” (Rosenau 1997: 299). In order to improve the knowledge in such matters, answers to the question of

“which kinds of basic values and religious convictions are related to which kinds collective action around which kinds of orientations towards which kinds of internationalized governance” may prove valuable. To find an answer to this complicated question is undoubtedly demanding.

Different kinds of orientations towards the UN

Theoretically, an orientation towards the UN may concern almost any position an individual can take with respect to this organization. A recent typology of orientations towards internationalized governance distinguishes four modes of orientation towards five different aspects or elements of such governance (Niedermayer and Westle 1998). These distinctions allow more than 30 different orientations, where inferences from one to another may be problematic. What is true for e.g. diffuse evaluations of UN policy outcomes, need not necessarily hold for behavioral intentions with regard to a specific part of the organization like the UNESCO. The analyses presented in this paper focus on only two of these many orientations, namely orientation towards the vertical power structure within the UN, and general confidence in the UN, respectively. Especially the first of these two orientations is of particular interest in today’s discussions on the needs to reform the UN system.

Orientation towards the UN vertical power structure: The horizontal and the vertical power structure are two different dimensions of the power structure within the UN. The former refers to the distribution of power among the various parts of the UN like for instance UNESCO and WHO, while the latter covers the distribution of power between the international and the national levels. The vertical power structure is a topic of key interest. “At the core of the controversies over the U.N.’s expanding roles is the question of whether it remains the servant of the states that created it in 1945 or, instead, is becoming an autonomous actor with its own authority” (Rosenau 2000: 150). According to the state-centered realist version of IR theory, the member states “have the capacity in any situation to curb or to end the activities of U.N. officials deemed to have exceeded the authority granted them by the Security Council” (ibid). Even if the liberalist or interdependence version of IR theory does not deny that the member states have the ultimate control over the UN, it emphasizes that this control is comparatively seldom used. Thus, this line of thought is more apt to see the UN as a site for cooperation among the member states. The postinternationalist non-state-centered IR perspective on the other hand, interprets many of the UN actions as expressions of an independent autonomy on behalf of the UN, and argues that UN officials “have a leeway that, for all practical purposes, is essential free of supervision and thus

amounts to an independent, autonomous authority” (ibid). The last decades have witnessed a development where the postinternationalist understanding of the distribution of the vertical power within the UN has gained support (Rosenau 1997: 394-396).

The UN system was designed to be an extension and function of the states system. To the degree that the state system is weakened by globalization processes, the UN system may decline along the same processes (Hettne 2002). In such a situation, the UN needs to be reformed. Parts of this reformation are bound to concern the redistribution of the vertical power structure within the UN system. For these reasons, the distribution of the vertical power within the UN is both a theoretically and politically important issue.

Of the many other orientations towards the UN, one concerns a kind of over-all and diffuse evaluation of the organization. In order to tap this orientation, the degree of confidence in the UN can be used. Thus, confidence in the UN can be used as an indicator of the over-all legitimacy of the organization. Confidence in the UN can therefore be seen as an important aspect of the status this organization enjoys at the grass root level.

Data on orientations towards the UN

In this paper, a new set of data on grass-root orientations towards the UN will be analyzed. These data come from the most recent wave of the European Values Study/the World Values Survey (EVS/WVS). In the following section, these data sets will be presented.

The EVS/WVS projects: The EVS/WVS project was launched at the end of the seventies, and aimed at investigating fundamental value orientations in Western Europe. A large scale survey was conducted in all countries of the European Community (EC) in 1981, as well as in Spain and the Scandinavian countries, etc. The project aroused great interest, and more than 20 countries participated in the first wave. To explore value changes, a second wave of surveys was fielded in 1990. This time, some 45 countries participated. In 1995/1996, a third wave was conducted in about 55 countries around the world. In 1999-2000, the most recent wave was fielded in about 65 countries. This wave included a set of Islamic societies (e.g. Albania, Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Morocco, Indonesia). The inclusion of these countries was to a large degree made possible by grants from Swedish research agencies¹. All in all, the EVS/WVS project covers about 80 percent of the world population, and about 75 different

¹The Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation, SIDA, the KK-foundation.

countries have participated in at least one of the four waves.² In comparison with similar comparative projects like the European Social Survey (ESS), the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), or the International Social Justice Project (ISJP), the EVS/WVS project is characterized by the simultaneous coverage of a great number of different value domains, the longitudinal design, and the global approach.

Countries: In this paper, data on orientations towards the UN from two groups of countries will be compared. The first group consists of four Islamic countries. These are Egypt, Jordan, Iran, and Indonesia. The second group consists of four Western countries with a predominately Christian heritage. These countries are the US, Spain, Sweden, and the Philippines. Obviously, to include the Philippines among a group of Western countries can be questioned. However, in various analyses of the Huntington thesis of a clash between civilizations (Huntington 1996), the Philippines have been included in the same group of Catholic countries as Spain, Italy, Austria, etc (cf. Esmer 2002, Inglehart and Norris 2002). A further reason to include the Philippines was that this country offers an interesting comparison to Indonesia, the world's largest Islamic country. The sample sizes for the eight countries were: US 1.200, Spain 1.209, Sweden 1,014, the Philippines 1.200, Egypt 3.000, Jordan 1.265, Iran 2.532, and Indonesia 1.004. In the analyses of the data which are described in this paper, only those respondents who considered themselves to be Muslims, and those who said they were members in a Christian church or denomination, respectively, were included. Thus, the various religious minorities in the two groups of countries are not taken into account. In several of the analyses, the respondents are weighted in order to yield 1.000 respondents for each country. By this weighting, the countries can easily be aggregated into two groups of equal size. However, it should be noted that due to this weighting, the comparatively small Jordan with its 5 million inhabitants is given the same importance as Indonesia with a population of about 231 million people. Among the Western countries, the equally small Sweden with its 9 million inhabitants is given the same weight as the US with its 280 million inhabitants. Had one however not weighted the country samples in this way, the comparison of the two groups would to a large degree have become a comparison between the US and Indonesia.

It should be noted that the data from the 8 countries were collected before the attack on the World Trade Center on December 11. Possible changes in peoples' views on the UN after this event are therefore not mirrored by the data. The exception is that half of the Egyptian data were collected after September 11.

² For further information on the EVS/WVS projects, see the websites www.evs.kub.nl and www.worldvaluessurvey.org,

Orientations towards the UN: The EVS/WVS questionnaire includes a battery of questions which ask whether people think that problems in relation to international peacekeeping, protection of the environment, aid to developing countries, refugee programs, and human rights, respectively, are best handled by the respective national governments themselves, by the national governments working together with coordination by the UN, or by the UN itself, rather than by the various national governments. A set of factor analyses demonstrate that the answers to these five items relate to one and the same dimension. A confirmatory factor analysis of a similar one-factor structure among the Muslim and Christian respondents on a 15 percent sample of the data file analyzed in this paper yielded the following results: Chi-square 6.8, 6 df, $p = .34$, AGFI = .99, RMSEA = .01, $p = .99$. Preferences for the UN alone as the best handler of these five problem-areas, can therefore be said to indicate preferences for a one-dimensional centralized vertical power structure, where the UN system is given power and authority beyond the various member states.

Another dimension of peoples' orientations towards the UN relate to their general confidence in this organization for global governance. In the EVS and WVS questionnaires, confidence in the UN is measured by only one question, which is part of a battery of questions on confidence in a variety of different institutions and organizations. With reference to the typology for orientations towards the UN mentioned above, this question can be assumed to tap a kind of diffuse evaluation of the UN *in toto*.

It should be noted that especially the question on confidence in the UN is marked by an unusually high percentage of non-responses. Therefore, the results for this question should be interpreted with care (cf. Pettersson 2002b).

The United Nations between Islam and the secularized West

In Table 1, the results from the two groups of countries are reported at quite a general level. More detailed reports can be found elsewhere (Pettersson 2002b). Firstly, one may note a tendency which is common to both groups of countries. With one exception, there is a majority for the opinion that the various types of international problems should be solved by UN-coordinated efforts from the countries concerned. Presumably, this is also how most UN missions are organized. In other words, a majority in both groups of countries seemed to prefer the present mode of UN workings. Maybe, the respondents were not aware of other alternatives, possibly because the public discussions on these issues have so far been minor and less attended. Except for the protection of the environment, rather small minorities

ranging around one fifth are of the opinion that the UN should not be involved at all in any of the various problem areas, while somewhat larger minorities seem to prefer a more autonomous and independent UN. With regard to the majority preferences for the UN to act as coordinator of the efforts by the countries concerned, there are hardly any substantial differences between the two groups of countries. In the case of a future reform into a more autonomous and independent UN, the lack of popular support may therefore be equally pressing in both the Islamic and the Western world. Overall, the preferences for a centralized vertical power within the UN are highest in the case of aid to developing countries and international peace-keeping, and lowest for the protection of the environment.

However, there are also some interesting differences between the two groups of countries. Especially in the case of aid for economic development and refugee programs, respectively, the Islamic countries appear to be more in favor of an autonomous and independent UN as compared to the Western. These differences are not minor. Almost 40 percent of the Muslim respondents favor a more autonomous UN in the case of support for economic development, while the corresponding percentage for the four Western countries is significantly lower (about 30 percent). In this regard, the Philippines are closer to the Islamic countries than to the Western. It can therefore be argued that this difference between the two groups is more related to economical circumstances than religious. With regard to refugee programs, the corresponding percentages for the Islamic and the Western countries are 35 and 20 percent. In this matter, the Philippines are closer to the Western pattern.

Thus, in the case of aid for economic development and refugee programs, people the Islamic countries are substantially more in favor of an independent and autonomous UN than Western people. At the same time, they have considerably less confidence in the UN. Only one third of them claimed “quite a lot” or “a great deal” of confidence, while the corresponding percentage for the four Western countries was almost double as high, or about two thirds. This pattern may indicate that in the Islamic countries, people are less confident in the UN *because* they do not find this organization to act as independent as they wish with regard to economic development and refuge programs. Rather, it can be imagined that in these instances, the UN is thought to be too much dominated by the interests of the Western donor countries.

However, there are also marked differences between the countries within one and the same group of countries. The Egyptians are more in favor of an autonomous and independent UN than the Iranians and Jordanians, and people in Indonesia have substantially greater confidence in the UN as compared to the respondents from the other three Islamic countries.

Such differences question the assumption of a general Islamic impact on peoples' understandings of the UN. Rather, in accordance with the introductory theoretical discussion, one may assume that the specific geo-political and economical experiences of a country would influence peoples' views on the UN: "for most states, most of the time, the United Nations is primarily an instrument of foreign policy to protect interests, enhance influence, or achieve specific goals" (Trent 1995: 466). For instance, among Islamic countries Algeria is known for its long positive involvement in the UN (Cheik 1995). Thus, orientations towards the UN may well differ, both between different Islamic countries, and between different camps within each of them. The same would of course hold for the Western countries.

In order to explore somewhat more in detail the impact of religious factors on peoples' views on the UN, a set of multiple regression analyses have been performed for each country separately. In these analyses, orientations towards the UN served as dependent variables, and age, gender, education, social class, confidence in the religious institutions, and social trust as independent. Confidence in the religious institutions was measured by a composite score, tapping confidence in the churches/the mosques, satisfaction with the answers given by the religious institutions, and attendance at the church or mosque. Social trust was measured by another composite score, tapping whether one generally trusts other people, one feels that others will not take advantage of oneself, and one thinks that it is important to show other people respect and tolerance. The results demonstrate that commitment to both Islam and Christianity was negatively related to confidence in the UN and preferences for a centralized vertical power structure within the UN. In these regards, then, commitment to Islamic and Christianity seemed to work in the same direction. This finding is in line with the general pattern found in the group comparisons described above.

Views on Human Rights

As already mentioned, Islamic views on Human Rights have been said to give raise to negative Muslim orientations towards the UN. For instance, since sharia requirements in the case of gender roles and the rights of non-Muslims have been seen as incompatible with international human rights conventions, Islamic culture is said to foster negative views on the UN, especially in its role as a promoter of Human Rights. However, the discussion also emphasized that the Islamic countries hardly have poorer records than many non-Muslim societies with regard to ratifying Human Rights conventions. The issue of possibly different Muslim understandings of Human Rights obviously deserves further attention. In these regards, the two groups of countries which are compared in this paper can both be expected to differ and to be similar.

On the one hand, the four Islamic countries are often described as authoritarian and non-democratic, more or less built on oppression and disregard for political and civil rights. For instance, according to the Human Development Report (Table A1.1), these four countries score considerably lower than the four Western countries in terms of the human development index, the degree of civil liberties (e.g. freedom of expression of beliefs, freedom of association), the degree of political liberties (e.g. freedom of political organization, freedom from domination by powerful groups), the level of voice and accountability (e.g. free and fair elections, freedom of the press, no military in politics), political stability and lack of violence, law and order (e.g. legal impartiality and popular observance of the law), and the rule of law (e.g. absence of unpredictability of the judiciary). From such circumstances one may expect the citizens of the Islamic societies to be less satisfied with the Human Rights situation in their countries as compared to the citizens in the four Western countries.

On the other hand, there are also reasons to expect the citizens of the two groups of countries to be more or less similar in their perception of the Human Rights situation in their countries. For one thing, they may understand the concept of Human rights in rather different ways. Thus, "Human Rights" is a summary label for a number of different rights. In the Universal Declaration of these rights, a first generation of rights (articles 3-21) sets forth the civil and political rights to which everyone is entitled (e.g. freedom from torture, arbitrary arrest, interference with privacy, etc.). A second generation (articles 22-27) sets forth the economic, social, and cultural rights (e.g. the right to work, the right to rest and leisure, the right to participate in the cultural life of one's community), while a third generation (articles 28-30) secures a framework of solidarity, safeguarding the universal enjoyment of all Human Rights (e.g. the right to social order assuring human rights, freedom from state or other interference in human rights). In addition to these three generations of rights, there are also numerous other Human Rights Conventions, like e.g. the Convention of elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, the International Convention on the protection of rights of immigrant workers and members of their families, etc. etc.

Thus, when people from different countries are asked to evaluate the Human Rights situation in their home country, they may consider different rights. In this choice, it is not unlikely that they are influenced by the political self-image of their home country (Forsythe 2000a: 2). For instance, according to the US public discourse on Human Rights, the US is portrayed as a global leader for personal freedom, especially in terms of civil and political rights, in spite of the fact that the US has "continued to reject a clear consistent, and meaningful endorsement of most socio-economic rights" (Forsythe 2000a: 21). When US citizens are asked to

evaluate the human rights situation in their country, they would therefore be likely to focus on the first generation of individual and political rights and to neglect the second and the third. In Iran on the other side, the human rights policy is intimately entwined with Iran's relation to the US, a country which at many occasions has been publicly and ritually denounced as the "Great Satan" (Karabell 2000: 206). In the Iranian public discourse, criticisms of Iran's lacking respect for Human rights are often interpreted as attempts to undermine the Islamic revolution. One should also note that the Iranian discourse claims to secure "Islamic rights", which in at least some respects are identical to the Human Rights endorsed by the UN (Karabell 2000: 221). Furthermore, Iranian officials have launched sharp attacks on the denial of Human Rights for women by other regimes, for instance by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan (Karabell 2000: 220). Thus, according to Iranian public discourse, Iran stands for the protection of proper Islamic Human Rights. In addition, a recent improvement of the Human Rights situation in Iran should also be noted (Karabell 2000: 221). It is not unlikely that such a recent improvement in the Human Rights situation may affect peoples' evaluations of the Human rights situation, even if the improvement is minor in an absolute and comparative measure (cf Inglehart 1997: 64f).

In summary, two contradictory hypotheses on peoples' evaluation of the Human rights situation can be forwarded. On the one hand, the multi-dimensional nature of Human Rights, and the influences from the various national self-images with regard to Human Rights situation among the eight Western and Islamic countries, may prevent systematic differences between the Muslim and Western respondents' over-all evaluations of the Human Rights situation in their various home countries. On the other hand, the differences between the two groups of countries with regard to the actual situation for the Human Rights as described by the Human Development Report, may give rise to systematically lower over-all evaluations of the human Rights situation among the four Islamic countries. It is of obvious interest to investigate these two hypotheses further.

The EVS/WVS questionnaire included some questions which allow a preliminary investigation of these two hypotheses. Regrettably, only one question asked how much respect the respondents found for individual Human Rights in the countries where they live. The responses were given on a four-point response scale, ranging from "No respect at all" to "A lot of respect". The questionnaire also included questions on the degree of confidence in the police and the armed forces, respectively. In some contexts, these two institutions are said to secure Human Rights, in others to violate them. The responses were given on a four-point scale, ranging from "No confidence at all" to "A great deal". Another question for confidence in national government asked how satisfied the respondents were with "people

now in national office”. The responses were given on a four-point scale, ranging from “very dissatisfied” to “very satisfied”. The results for these questions are reported in Table 2.

Surprisingly enough, although there are some statistically significant differences between the two groups, the data indicate rather similar evaluations of the Human Rights situation among the two groups of Islamic and the Western countries. In both groups, the response “some respect” was given by the largest fractions. Thus, even among the four Western countries, it was only about one fifth who found “a great deal of respect” for human rights in their home countries, and people from the four Muslim societies found only slightly less respect in their countries as compared to the Western respondents (mean value 2.8 as compared to 2.9). However, in many instances, the differences between the countries within one and the same group of countries appear to be of equal or even a larger magnitude than the differences between the two groups (compare e.g. the means for Sweden and the Philippines: 2.9 and 3.1). Equally surprising, confidence in the police, the armed forces, and people in national office was higher for the Muslim respondents. Thus, the latter showed *greater confidence and satisfaction* than the respondents from the four Western societies! These unexpected findings can even be said to cast doubt on the validity of these data.

In order to explore the validity of these questions, a set of multiple regression analyses has been performed for each country separately. The results, which are not reported in detail here, show that the less confidence people have in the police and people in national office, the less respect they find for the Human Rights in their country. It can also be shown, that the less respect people find for Human Rights, the *more* they want the UN to be a strong and potent actor for the promotion of these rights. These findings can be interpreted as evidence of the validity of the question on Human Rights, at least when used for within-country analyses.

Thus, one may tentatively conclude that the rather similar results for the two groups of countries need not be explained by bad measurements. Rather, in accordance with the above discussion, the respondents from the two groups of countries may have had different parts of the Human Rights in mind when they gave their evaluations of the respect shown to Human Rights in their home countries. In addition, their answers may have been affected by the various national public discourses and self-images with regard to the Human rights situation. It should also be noted that another analysis of a larger number of countries which is not reported in detail here, indicate a very interesting U-shaped curvi-linear relationship between the respect people find for Human Rights and the actual level of political and civil rights according to the Freedom House ratings. The relationship from an analysis of 64 countries is demonstrated in Figure 1. At the lowest levels of political and civil rights, increases in these

rights seem to be associated with increasing *negative* evaluations of the Human Rights situation. One may suggest that in such a situation, people have become more aware of the importance of Human Right issues, and the comparatively minor changes have yielded a strong demand for further improvements, and a kind of dissatisfaction with the present levels. However, in contexts where the political and civil liberties are comparatively well secured, further improvements would be likely to yield increased satisfaction with the Human Rights situation. Figure 1 presents a scatterplot of the relationship between the freedom House ratings for political and civil rights, and the EVS/WVS results fro the satisfaction with the Human Rights situation in one’s country.

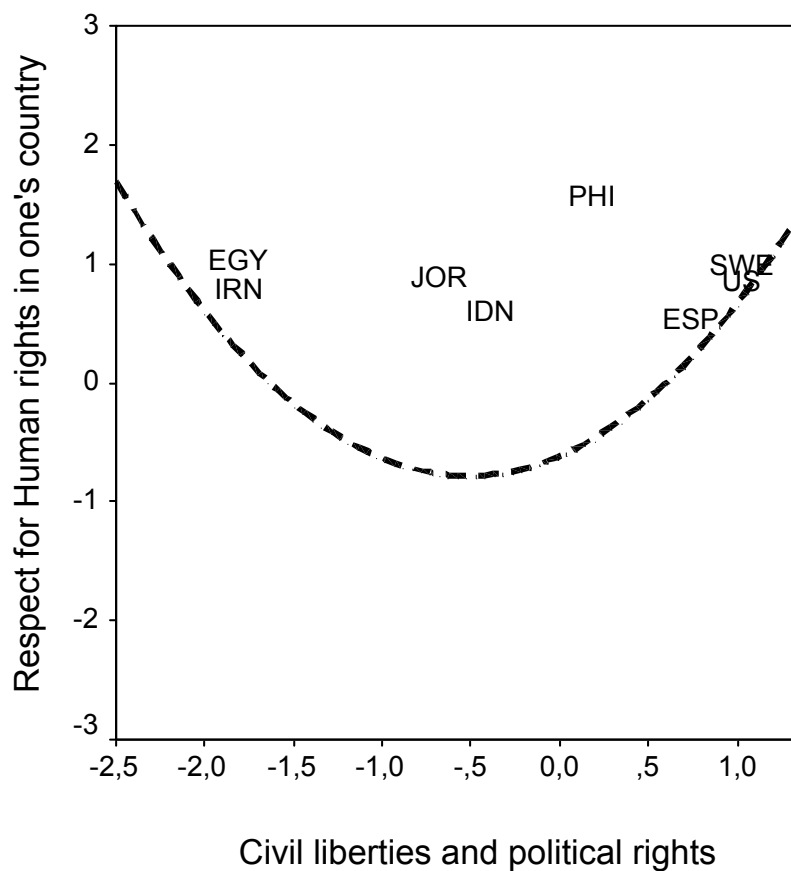


Figure 1. Hypothetical relation between civil liberties and political rights, and the amount of respect people find for Human Rights in one’s country, respectively. The curvi-linear relationship between the two dimensions is based on data for 64 countries.

According to Figure 1, Jordan, Indonesia, and the Phillipines score higher on the vertical dimension than one would expect from the degree of political rights and civil liberties. A discussion of the reasons for these exceptions from the general pattern must be postponed to another analysis. However, in a general sense one may conclude that the rather similar evaluations of the Human Rights situation among the two groups of countries simply mean that the Muslim respondents were equally satisfied with the Human Rights situation *as this is described by the self-images of their countries*, as the Western respondents were satisfied with the situation as this is depicted by Human Rights discourses of their countries.

However, even if the evaluation of the Human Rights situation are to a substantial degree affected by the political self-image of one's country, it is still of interest to investigate how this evaluation is related to both the religious factor and other value dimensions as e.g. horizontal social trust, vertical social trust, social background, etc. The results from such analyses are reported in Table 3.

Table 3. Perceived respect for the Human Rights in one's country regressed on national belonging, social background, religious involvement, social trust, confidence people in national office and the police. Results from the 2000 WVS survey in two groups of countries. Entries are unstandardized multiple regression coefficients.

	Four Islamic countries (n aprx 3.300)	Four Western countries (n aprx 3.600)
Constant:	1.63	2.37
National belonging:		
Egypt/US	-.13 ***	-.06
Iran/Spain	.02	-.16 ***
Indonesia/Philippines	.13 **	.20 ***
Social background:		
Age	.01 *	- .00
Gender	.09 **	-.10 ***
Class	.00	.04 **
Value orientations:		
Social trust	.01	-.00
Religion important	.00	.02
Confidence people national office	.29 ***	.23 ***
Multiple R	.27 ***	.30 ***

Interestingly enough, the results show that religious involvement has no effect on the evaluation of the Human Rights situation in one's country, independently of whether the religious factor relates to Islam or Christianity. In neither case does the religious factor have any impact. In this sense, the four Islamic countries appear as equally secularized as the four

Western countries. Of the trust factors, it is only the vertical trust which is positively related to the evaluation of the Human Rights situation. This supports the above discussion on the importance and impact on the political self-image.

Summary conclusion

Previous research on global governance has been said to show a “glaring neglect” for analyses of the UN system, in spite of the many needs for improved knowledge in these matters. An obvious lack of empirical studies of ordinary peoples’ orientations towards the UN, maybe the most important organization for global governance, has also been noted. At the same time, recent developments in IR theory has witnessed an increased interest in mass public orientations towards global governance. The more these orientations relate to peoples’ deeply held values and religious convictions, the stronger impact these orientations may have on international politics. Consequently, in order to assess the importance of peoples’ orientations towards global governance, the relations between these and their basic values and religious convictions, become a key issue. The stronger the relationships, the more influential their orientations are likely to be. This is the basic theoretical point of departure for this paper.

Islamic culture has been said to promote negative orientations towards the UN, although there are also several reasons to question this claim. In order to investigate this issue, this paper has investigated data from the most recent wave of the European Values Study and the World Values Survey, respectively, for one group of Islamic countries and one group of more secularized Western countries. In summary, the results showed that neither the Islamic societies as such, nor the citizens within each of these, should be regarded as homogenous in their religious and political attitudes, including their orientations towards the UN and Human Rights. With regard to the former, two different orientations towards the UN have been investigated. These were general confidence in the UN as such, and views on how to distribute the vertical power within the UN. The latter dimension was said to concern one of the core controversies over the UN, and to be of substantial theoretical and political interest with regard to a possibly reformed UN. With regard to Human Rights, the paper has analyzed data related to the respect for Human Rights and confidence in the police, the armed forces, and people in national office.

The findings led to the conclusion that the two groups of countries seem to hold rather similar understandings of the UN. In both groups, a majority appeared to prefer the UN to act as a coordinator for the countries which are confronted by various types of international

problem-areas, and both groups of countries were most inclined towards a centralized UN in the case of aid to developing countries, peace-keeping, and refugee programs. However, there were also some differences between the Islamic and the Western countries with regard to their views on the UN. The preferences for a more autonomous UN were stronger among the Islamic countries, while the general confidence in the UN was lower. This pattern was assumed to indicate that in the Islamic countries, people were less confident in the UN *because* they did not find this organization to act as independent as they would prefer, maybe in relation to the Israel-Palestine conflict. However, a further set of analyses demonstrated that the two groups of countries were not homogenous in these regards. Therefore, there were reasons to question the assumption of a general and over-arching impact of the Islamic culture on peoples' orientations towards international politics and global governance. Furthermore, a set of country by country analyses demonstrated that higher levels of involvement in both Islam and Christianity, respectively, were associated with fewer preferences for a more autonomous UN, and with stronger confidence in the way the UN works today. In this way, commitment to both Islam and Christianity appeared to work in the same direction.

A similar result was found with regard to peoples' evaluations of the Human Rights situation in their country, despite the fact that the Islamic and Western countries differ considerably with regard to the actual levels of protection for Human Rights. This finding was said to indicate that the respondents from the two groups of countries may have interpreted the concepts of Human Rights in different ways, and that they were affected by the various national public discourses on Human Rights. Thus, the results did not indicate that living in a Islamic cultural context or being committed to Islamic would generate more doubts on whether the Human Rights are respected in one's country or not. Rather, a preliminary analysis suggested that a curvi-linear relationship between the degree of civil liberties and political rights on the one hand, and the amount of respect people find for Human Rights in their home country on the other.

In this sense, the results reported in this paper have not supported the assumption that Islamic and Christian cultures should give rise to different understandings, neither of the UN system, maybe the most important organization for the handling of global politics, nor of peoples' evaluation of the respect which is shown to what they understand to be Human Rights, one of the key values with which the UN system is associated.

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