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## Religion in the Age of Migration

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### ABSTRACT

There has been little research on the significance of religion in migration studies. The objective of this article is twofold: first, to explain religion as a complexly intertwined concept within migration discourses; second, to examine the implications of various terminologies such as Islamism, political Islam, and the politicization of Islam in the modern world within a broad migration framework. We have chosen 11 respondents from different countries by snow-ball technique to interview. The paper argues that religion becomes crucial to people's migratory experiences, aiming to construct a theoretically informed link between religion and migration. The study emphasizes the significance of international standards in ensuring migrants' 'religious rights' in host countries. The interesting thing is that migrants bring their religious beliefs, practices, and way of life with them, enriching destination countries by exposing them to new cultures and fostering social cohesiveness via peaceful coexistence.

### Introduction

Two of the most significant migration events in human history were related to religion. Prophet Moses led his followers to move from Egypt to Israel after wandering in Mount Sinai for forty years. Prophet Mohammad migrated with his followers from Mecca to Medina to move away from persecution. The incidence of religious beliefs and sentiments sparking conflicts and efforts to prevent people from practicing their religion is a significant motivator for migration in the twenty-first century. At the same time, the issue of freedom to practice religion in the socioeconomic and political conditions prevailing in the destination countries has also emerged as a critical issue.

Migrant identities can influence and be influenced by the new socioreligious network in which they find themselves, making migration and religion a complicated phenomenon. The post-9/11 era has changed people's attitudes toward religion, resulting in a revisiting of migration and religion in all areas of social science. The migration-religion relationship has manifested differently in public and private discourses than the conventional perception of these notions. Migration is viewed as a means of diversifying incomes both within and beyond the country and a safe harbour for individuals who

plan to leave permanently. This stance on migration remained unchanged until late 2001. Since then, migration research has shifted away from a broad and comprehensive demographic push-pull strategy in favour of defining specific characteristics associated with migration.<sup>1</sup> In this sense, people's perceptions of migration have shifted substantially. To date, no study has looked into migration as a response to personal faith.<sup>2</sup>

As we confront differing viewpoints in global politics, religion has become an entrenched component in the migration realm. As a result, religion has been inextricably linked to today's migration policy discourse. For example, mobility restrictions has been eventually imposed, particularly on Muslim countries.<sup>3</sup> Significant changes have been introduced at airports, which have an influence on passengers' privacy. These adjustments cost billions of dollars in person-hours spent queuing for security checks, which took an inordinate amount of time. Because X-ray machines pervade passengers' garments, these screening, i.e. they infringe on their privacy. The purpose of this article is to show the relationship between migration and religion as it manifested itself before and after 9/11. The discussion focuses on the potential tension individuals and families may face when opting to migrate away from their place of worship. It will help us determine the relative importance of migration, and will be beneficial to build a philosophically-informed relationship between religion and migration.

Panagopoulos (2006) investigated numerous opinion polls in the aftermath of 9/11. He noticed a remarkable consistency in openly discriminatory attitudes toward Muslim and Arab Americans (i.e. open and direct discrimination).<sup>4</sup> Concurrently, he identified evidence of a rising trend in subtle forms of prejudice (i.e. more disguised and indirect forms of antipathy). People were more concerned about Islam's apparent conflict with Western values.<sup>5</sup> The realization that migration would cut people off from their places of worship and from an important socioreligious network that promotes religious beliefs, practices, and lifestyles while also offering significant benefits. Hence, migration entails more than just leaving one's religious institution.<sup>6</sup> Migrant identities can be formed and identified by a range of criteria, including socioeconomic status, gender, nationality, ethnicity, and religion.

When globalization boosts religious outreach practices, tensions and controversy occur, which can be especially acute in the case of migrants even after they have arrived in their new homes<sup>7,8</sup>. As a result, a growing number of social scientists, lawmakers, religious leaders, and policymakers have come to acknowledge the relevance of multifaceted relationship of religion with migration in the early twenty-first century. This is evidenced by the vast number of studies on this issue. Religion and

<sup>1</sup>G. F. D. Jong, J. M. Wilmoth, J. L. Angel, and G. T. Cornwell, 'Motives and the Geographic Mobility of Very Old Americans', *Journal of Gerontology*, 50B (1995), pp. S395–S404.

<sup>2</sup>S. M. Myers, 'The Impact of Religious Involvement on Migration', *Social Forces*, 79(2) (2000), pp. 755–783.

<sup>3</sup>C. R. Counihan, 'American Immigration Policy since 9/11: Impact on Muslim Migrants. Policy Brief # 19. Washington. *Institute for Social Policy and Understanding* (2007).

<sup>4</sup>C. Panagopoulos, 'Arab and Muslim Americans and Islam in the Aftermath of 9/11', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 70:4 (2006), pp. 608–624. <https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfl029>

<sup>5</sup>AKM Ahsan Ullah, *Divergence and Convergence in the Nation-State: The Roles of Religion and Migration*. New York: *Nova Science* (2012).

<sup>6</sup>S. M. Myers, 'The Impact of Religious Involvement on Migration', *Social Forces*, 79:2 (2000), pp. 755–783.

<sup>7</sup>M. Juergensmeyer (eds.) *Global Religions. An Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>8</sup>R. Robertson, 'Antiglobal Religion', in M. Juergensmeyer (ed) *Global Religions. An Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 110–123.

migration theories are connected with a wide range of other themes, including gender and globalization, transnational networks and virtual communication, multiculturalism and mobilities, exclusionary processes, and human rights.<sup>9</sup>

## Methodology

We employed both primary and secondary data sources for our study. They helped us develop a strong argument by complementing each other. Although primary sources are more believable as evidence, secondary sources explain how our study links to previous research. Data gathered from personal experiences has been scientifically synthesized. Without a doubt, desk research is one of the most viable tactics because it generates a large amount of data as part of everyday activity. The primary advantage of performing desk research is that it can be done with existing internal and external organizational resources, allowing data to be structured in a way that is not only efficient but also usable. We were able to find the necessary information by using the internet and several search engines. Relevant material was examined and analyzed, and several migrants were interviewed to share their thoughts on the religious-migration relationship. Since 2000, a plethora of websites, databases, research efforts, conferences, seminars, course modules at universities, and research centres have grown up in an effort to advance understanding of the links between migration and religious belief. Examining migration with a focus on religion is now critical for numerous undeniable reasons. Transnational and global dynamics have a substantial impact on religious conceptions' potential to influence the lives and opportunities of an expanding number of people around the world. Because of the emergence of new electronic communication, information, and mobilization technology, religious groups and organizations can now exercise a level of influence on migratory and established populations that was before imagined.<sup>10</sup> We interviewed 11 respondents by using an open-ended questionnaire selected from a number of countries (e.g. Thailand, USA, Australia, Canada; Malaysia; Germany, France and India). They were selected on a snow-ball basis. We wanted to know what their experiences have been as a migrant in the country of destinations.

## The underlying theoretical perspective

Several issues arose while we were developing the theoretical framework and methodological structure for this research. What factors influence religious-political relationships? What distinguishes those collaborations now from those in the past? What elements influence the emergence of religious-political conflict? Is this an example of economic, historical, or political links, or something else different? Is this a foreshadowing of Huntington's opined battle of civilizations? Huntington believes that the fundamental source of conflict in the twenty-first century will be cultural, namely civilizational, rather than ideological or economic. Researchers have investigated the impact of migration on people's faith, practices, and community formation, as well as

<sup>9</sup>James A. Beckford, 'Religions and migrations – old and new', *Quaderni di Sociologia*, 80 (2019), pp. 15–32.<https://doi.org/10.4000/qds.2599>

<sup>10</sup>D. E. Cowan, 'Religion on the Internet', in J.A. Beckford and N.J. Demerath III (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of the Sociology of Religion* (London: Sage, 2007), pp. 357–376.

the importance of faith and religious communities for migrants dealing with the stress, insecurities, and challenges of migration<sup>11,12,13,14,15,16,17</sup>. Many refugees' lives are definitely influenced by religion.<sup>18</sup> However, the reintroduction of religion into the public sphere, which is linked to national or international conflicts and fundamentalist ideologies, has called into question the multicultural society theories.<sup>19</sup> People like to tailor religion to their own particular needs. The level of religious bonding is determined by the individual's satisfaction of their own religious demands from one or more religious principles.<sup>20</sup> According to Casanova<sup>21</sup> (2008:101), in the European context, immigration entails religious pluralism, and comprehending the re-emergence of religion in those countries necessitates understanding the religions of migrants.

Migration and religion are contentious issues. However, in this study, religion refers to a wide range of emotions and activities associated with the belief in forces and things that are thought to transcend the essentially human. Migration refers to changes in human habitation that crosses regional, national, or international borders.<sup>22</sup> Migration is both a process and an outcome that can range from short-term to long-term, voluntary to involuntary, and individual to mass. Furthermore, it has been related to the expansion of diasporas as well as the influx of asylum seekers, internally displaced people, and refugees.

Migration and religion are intricately interwoven in today's society. As a result, governments have to adjust and modify their policies in order to achieve social cohesion, integration, and development in their societies. Although the majority of European countries adhere to plurality and individualism in their socioreligious policies, there are a few notable outliers.<sup>23</sup> This shows that these countries have accepted the existence of religious differences among migrants and between migrants and natives.<sup>24</sup> As a result, to ensure the social integration of aliens in their nations, they utilize both pluralistic and individualistic policies. This begs the important question of whether official restrictions

<sup>11</sup>M. Frederiks, 'Religion, Migration, and Identity a Conceptual and Theoretical Exploration', *Mission Studies*, 32:2 (2015), pp. 181–202.

<sup>12</sup>A. Adogame, 'Pentecostudies: An Interdisciplinary Journal for Research on the Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements', *Transnational migration and Pentecostalism in Europe*, 9:1 (2010), pp. 56–73.

<sup>13</sup>A. Adogame, *The African Christian Diaspora: New Currents and Emerging Trends in World Christianity* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013).

<sup>14</sup>R. Schreiter, 'Spaces for Religion and Migrants Religious Identity', *Forum Mission* 5 (2009), pp.155–171.

<sup>15</sup>B. Simon, *From Migrants to Missionaries: Christians of African Origin in Germany* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang GmbH, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften; illustrated edition, February 18, 2010).

<sup>16</sup>A. Stepick, 'God is Apparently Not Dead: The Obvious, the Emergent, and the Yet Still Unknown in Immigration and Religion', In K.I. Leonard, A. Stepick, M. Vasquez, and J. Holdaway (eds) *Immigrant Faiths: Transforming Religious Life in America* (New York: Altamira Press, 2005), pp. 11–37.

<sup>17</sup>C. Währisch-Oblau, *The Missionary Self-Perception of Pentecostal/ Charismatic Church Leaders from the Global South in Europe: Bringing Back the Gospel* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

<sup>18</sup>Tang Lay Lee, 'Refugees from Bhutan: Nationality, Statelessness and the Right to Return', *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 10:1 (1998), pp. 118–155.

<sup>19</sup>J. E. C. Guerra, 'Beyond conflict: Understanding the De-privatisation of Religion from the Social Capital of Religious Migrants' Organisations', In C. Sterkens, and P. Vermeer (eds) *Religion, migration and conflict* (Zurich: Lit Verlag GmbH & Co. KG Wien, 2015), pp. 47–168.

<sup>20</sup>G. Davie, 'Thinking Sociologically About Religion: Implications for Faith Communities', *Review of Religious Research*, 54:3 (2012), pp. 273–289.

<sup>21</sup>J. Casanova, 'Public Religion Revisited', In H. D. Vries (ed) *Religion: Beyond a concept* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), pp. 101–119.

<sup>22</sup>A. K. M. Ahsan Ullah, *Rationalizing Migration Decisions: Labour Migrants in South and South-East Asia* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010).

<sup>23</sup>Pace Enzo, *Religion as Communication: God's Talk* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011).

<sup>24</sup>AKM Ahsan Ullah, H. H. Noor, H. A. Siti Mazidah and C. Diotima, 'Migration and security: Implications for Minority Migrant Groups, India Quarterly'. *A Journal of International Affairs*, 76:1 (2020), pp.136–153.

on migrants' socioreligious identities are required. Religion must be reinvented in host-country politics since it defines migrants' identities. People in different host countries have diverse belief systems. Some states' social policies exclude migrants' belief systems because they are unable to provide appropriate information for the plurality and diversity of social norms and interactions that predominate in the new context.<sup>25</sup> Pace (2011) poses an important question: 'Who determines who?' The question is whether states should be the ones to shape migrants' socioreligious identities and practices, or whether migrants should be able to determine and choose their own socioreligious identities and practices.

The degree to which theological and pastoral authority within religious organizations is concerned with critical thinking about migration is one example of how religion and migration go hand in hand.<sup>26</sup> Reflections about being a stranger in a distant land, as well as religious obligations to welcome visitors and migrants, can be found in most religious traditions' sacred knowledge. It is worth emphasizing that historically, governments have not placed a high priority on religious issues among migrants when formulating regulations. This is because most societies are homogeneous, with the majority of people practicing the same faith. However, as a result of globalization and increased migrant flows around the world, societies are becoming more diverse. Therefore, governments had to take many paths and implement various policies to establish social cohesiveness to build a nation with diverse populations [Figure 1](#).

The availability of religious organizations and the right to practice religion benefit new migrants spiritually and psychologically. These services are critical for migrants after they arrive in the host country, as they are likely to face a number of issues, including loneliness and homesickness.<sup>27</sup> In the context of globalization, religious networks play an essential role in migration and settlement processes.<sup>28</sup> Religious globalization is a fact because religious communities migrate, resulting in religious practices, beliefs, and faith travelling worldwide.

According to Garbin (2018), migration, diasporization, trade, and colonial expansion have all contributed to the spread of numerous religions. Migration's scope and forms have evolved dramatically over the millennia, yet it is still a phenomenon that is closely tied to religion. Occasionally, migration is motivated by religious beliefs. The societies in which migrants and their descendants dwell are impacted in many more ways than only how they practice religion. The religious significance of migration and settlement in new places cannot be overstated. Religion can be life-saving under extreme circumstances such as those resulting from religious persecution or the pursuit of religious goals, but it would be an exaggeration to imply religion is always a necessary component. Indeed, the movement of people across international borders is helping to reshape the world's major religions.<sup>29</sup>

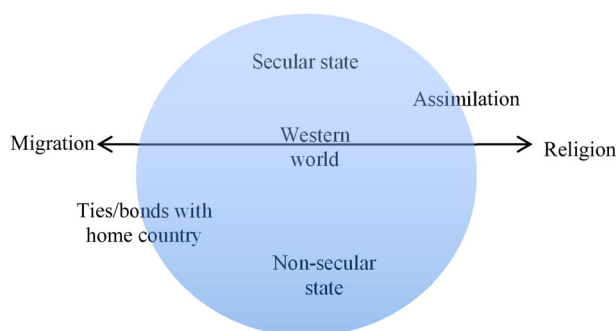
<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>J. M. Hagan, 'Crossing borders: transnational sanctuary, social justice, and the Church', in C. Bender, W. Cadge, P. Levitt and D. Smilde (eds) *Religion on the Edge. De-Centering and Re-Centering the Sociology of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 263–283.

<sup>27</sup>H. R. Ebaugh, 'Trans-nationality and Religion in Immigrant Congregations: The Global Impact', *Nordic Journal of Religion and Society*, 23:2 (2010), pp. 105–119.

<sup>28</sup>Nina Glick Schiller, et al. 'From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration', *Anthropological Quarterly*, 68:1 (1995), pp. 48–63 <https://doi.org/10.2307/3317464>.

<sup>29</sup>Pew Research Center, *The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010–2050. Why Muslims Are Rising Fastest and the Unaffiliated Are Shrinking as a Share of the World's Population* (2015). Retrieved from: [http://www.pewforum.org/files/2015/03/PF\\_15.04.02\\_ProjectionsFullReport.pdf](http://www.pewforum.org/files/2015/03/PF_15.04.02_ProjectionsFullReport.pdf).



**Figure 1.** Framework for the interplay of politics, religion and migration. Source: Authors, 2021.

### In search of roots and routes of migration

Much of the scholarly literature has dismissed the importance of religion in the migration process; yet, religion is significant to many migrants' travelling experiences. According to Hagan and Ebaugh<sup>30</sup> (2006), individuals use religion at various points throughout the migration process, including when deciding on a destination, preparing for the trip, travelling, arriving, learning about the role of the ethnic church (or religious institution) that assists them in settling in the new place, and developing transnational linkages. Religious beliefs have a substantial influence on all of these experiences.

Migration was motivated by a combination of religion and politics in the case of the Khilafat Movement in British India. The Ottoman Turkish empire, which had decided to form an alliance with Germany, had significant sympathies among Indian Muslims. Because of the British Indian government's anti-German stance, Khilafat Movement leaders urged Muslims to relocate from Dar-ul-Harb (the country of war) to Dar-ul-Aman (the land of peace) (home of peace). As a result, the cry spread across India, prompting approximately 30,000 Muslims to migrate to Afghanistan, the nearest Muslim country.

In a variety of ways, migration is influenced by religious commitment. The story of [im]migration is the story of nineteenth-century Roman Catholicism.<sup>31</sup> According to Byrne (2016), the face of American Catholicism began to shift in the mid-1840s, when a devastating potato famine compelled millions of Irish Catholics to come to America. In 2020, over 20 million pious Muslims were expected to visit Saudi Arabia, primarily on pilgrimage. The figure is rising as the religious tourism business develops in response to increased demand for annual pilgrimages. As a result, pilgrimage is the best example of Muslim migration. This assists Saudi Arabia in compensating for recent decreases in oil revenue, which accounts for 40% of the country's GDP, despite tourism accounting for only 3.5 percent of GDP in 2015.<sup>32</sup> Up to 5 million people visit Vatican City each year.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup>Hagan Jacqueline and Ebaugh Helen Rose, 'Calling Upon the Sacred: Migrants' Use of Religion in the Migration Process', *International Migration Review* 37:4, (2003), pp.1145–1162, 10.1111/j.1747-7379.2003.tb00173.x

<sup>31</sup>J. Byrne, *The Other Catholics: Remaking America's Largest Religion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

<sup>32</sup>Travel and Tourism in Saudi Arabia to 2020, [https://store.globaldata.com/report/tt0333mr--travel-and-tourism-in-saudi-arabia-to-2020/?utm\\_source=mediacenter&utm\\_medium=pr&utm\\_campaign=161019b\\_gd\\_cn\\_pr\\_saudi\\_arabia\\_tourism&utm\\_nooverride=1](https://store.globaldata.com/report/tt0333mr--travel-and-tourism-in-saudi-arabia-to-2020/?utm_source=mediacenter&utm_medium=pr&utm_campaign=161019b_gd_cn_pr_saudi_arabia_tourism&utm_nooverride=1)

<sup>33</sup>S. B. Morris, How Much Does The Vatican Make From Tourism? (2019), POPE 2YOU.NET

The journey (Hijrah) of the Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina in 622 AD has become a foundational example of migration in Islam. The religious journey is complicated because it involves spiritual, physical, personal, and collective movement and transformation simultaneously<sup>34, 35</sup>. The Tablighi Jamaat exemplifies how the migration – reterritorialization link is critical for understanding modern globalized religion.<sup>36</sup> Pilgrimages to Mecca trips to the Vatican and journeys by the Tablighi Jamaat are all part of the migration scope. This movement shows the intensity of migration and how mobility contributes to the formation of a migration stream. ‘Religion penetrates the entire migratory experience, from decision-making to departure through the journey from their home communities north to the United States’<sup>37</sup>.

The religious diversity of international migrants is astounding. Christians make up roughly half of the world’s 272 million foreign migrants or 49 percent of all people who live permanently in a nation other than their birthplace. Muslims account for the second-largest group of people who have crossed borders, accounting for around 60 million people (or 27 percent). Hindus (almost 11 million) make up 5 percent of the population, while Buddhists (approximately 7 million) make up 3 percent [Figure 2](#).<sup>38</sup>

Religion is a belief system that can organize social groups based on the respect of social norms, the practice of specific practices, and the establishment of social spaces. The Tablighi Jamaat, for example, was founded in colonial India in 1927 and has since evolved into a global movement. They have approximately 350 million followers spread throughout 150 countries.<sup>39</sup> Diasporic culture frequently diverges from that of the initial settlement location’s population. Culture, traditions, language, and other features of distantly dispersed people tend to change with time. When Buddhism arrived in India about 500 BC, a new generation of Indians began to venture far beyond their geographical bounds to seek knowledge and wisdom. The second-largest recognized Diaspora from India is Buddhist monks who go to various parts of the world to spread the message of peace and love<sup>40, 41</sup>.

Religion has an impact on the migration process from the moment a person decides whether or not to leave their home country—religion has varied effects on different age groups. According to Myers (2000), religious involvement is more critical for older migrants (over 50 years old) than younger migrants and migrants with children. ‘Older religious folks may believe that acquiring such intensive involvement in a new socioreligious network elsewhere is neither realistic nor appropriate given their age’<sup>42</sup>. These ‘new socioreligious network[s]’ can have a significant impact on migrant identity.

<sup>34</sup>Mumtaz Ahmad, ‘Islam, State, and Society in Bangladesh’ in John L. Esposito, John O. Voll and Osman Bakar (eds) *Asian Islam in the 21st Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 49–80.

<sup>35</sup>D. Garbin ‘Religion Migration, and Diasporas. The International Encyclopaedia of Anthropology. Edited by Hilary Callan’, John Wiley & Sons, Ltd (2018). DOI: 10.1002/9781118924396.wbiea2255

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>J.M. Hagan, ‘Crossing borders: transnational sanctuary, social justice, and the Church’, in C. Bender, W. Cadge, P. Levitt and D. Smilde (eds) *Religion on the Edge. De-Centering and Re-Centering the Sociology of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 263–283.

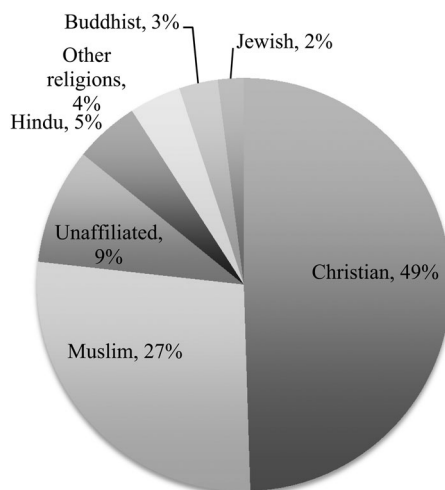
<sup>38</sup>Pew Research Center, Faith on the Move – The Religious Affiliation of International Migrants (2019). <https://www.pewforum.org/2012/03/08/religious-migration-exec/>

<sup>39</sup>S. Sultana, T. Islam, and M. J. Uddin, ‘Proliferation of Islamic Monotheism through Religious Tourism: An Overview on Tablighi Jamaat in Bangladesh’, *American Journal of Tourism Management*, 6:1 (2017), pp. 10–14

<sup>40</sup>L.M. ‘Herrington, Globalization and Religion in Historical Perspective: A Paradoxical Relationship’, *Religions*, 4:1 (2013), pp.145–165. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel4010145>

<sup>41</sup>Landry Lionel, ‘The Migrations of Buddhism’, *Focus on Asian Studies* 11:1 (1982), pp. 20, Fall.

<sup>42</sup>S. M. Myers, ‘The Impact of Religious Involvement on Migration’, *Social Forces*, 79:2, (2000), pp. 755–783.



**Figure 2.** Composition of international migrants by religion. Source: Pew Research Center, 2012.

Much of the contemporary debate over migration and religion revolves around the fact that immigrants' religious practices differ from those of native-born individuals.<sup>43</sup> External forces and situations may influence religious beliefs. Even after migration, individual religiosity is influenced by the country of origin characteristics, such as economic development, communist background, religious freedom, and social perspectives on religion.<sup>44</sup>

Although migrants' life before and after migration have an impact on their religious practices, their new environments and connections to other communities have an even greater impact.<sup>45</sup> Migration may create chances for the formation of new or hybrid religious concepts, identities, practices, and ways of integrating into society. Migrants to Western liberal democracies are especially hostile to changes in the gendering of religious identity and practice. Migration can exacerbate tensions and schisms within religious communities that were once united in their beliefs and practices. Hence, the relationship between [im]migration and religion is fluid. The purpose of the religious organizations is not just to provide support and resources to newcomers long after they have settled, but also to influence public opinions and policymakers' and lawmakers' decisions on a variety of contentious issues<sup>46,47,48</sup>. The growing number of religious structures and monuments created by migrants as symbols of their presence and investments in the areas where they

<sup>43</sup>M. Aleksynska, and B. R. Chiswick, 'Religiosity and Migration: Travel into One's Self versus Travel across Cultures', *Paper No. 5724*. Bonn: IZA (2011).

<sup>44</sup>AKM Ahsan Ullah, 'Origin – Destination Bridge: How does Diaspora build it?' *Diaspora Studies*, 11:1 (2017), pp. 38–52.

<sup>45</sup>P. Connor, 'Contexts of immigrant receptivity and immigrant religious outcomes: the case of Muslims in Western Europe', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, XXXIII:3, pp. 376–403.

<sup>46</sup>S. Allievi and J. Nielsen (eds.) (2003), *Muslim Networks and Transnational Communities in and across Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

<sup>47</sup>A. Adogame, 'Pentecostudies: An Interdisciplinary Journal for Research on the Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements', *Transnational migration and Pentecostalism in Europe*, 9:1 (2010), pp. 56–73.

<sup>48</sup>S.M. Cherry and H.R. Ebaugh (eds.) *Global Religious Movements across Borders* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

wish their children to carry on their faith and culture may be seen in the changing urban landscape<sup>49,50</sup>.

Many migrant groups struggle to keep their faith in countries that limit religious practice to one or more 'established' or 'recognized' faiths. Even decades after settling in a place like Saudi Arabia or Greece, migrants may find it impossible to break away from the stifling hold of their native faith. While minorities' requests for religious freedom in the face of hostility from majorities are common in many countries, they are not universal. Some of the most contentious issues originate from religious justifications that aim to exclude different aspects of society's standards, such as sex segregation in public schools, animal sacrifice for food, polygamy, burial rituals, and absence from work or school for religious holidays or prayer periods.<sup>51</sup>

## Religion vs. assimilation

People from particular ethnic and religious groups find it difficult to disassociate themselves from their homeland's religious traditions. People who choose to follow a religion different than the one in which they were brought up, or who reject all religions, are more likely to be affected by religious traditions of their homeland. Nonetheless, it is a common experience for migrants who are attempting to reconcile their culturally established religious proclivities with their new environment. Trying to find new or hybrid ways of combining elements of one's original religious identity with elements gained from other sources might be difficult for newer generations of migrants.<sup>52</sup> People are born and raised in a family, a home, a religion, a culture, and a state, meaning that they are born into a bond. Renouncing this bond, according to Simms (2016), is assimilation. However, it is occasionally necessary to accept it entirely or partially. [Im]migrants live, move, and inhabit the area that has been assigned to them, and they are tied to communal spheres; the quality of their life is determined by how well they maintain these relationships. Migration shatters their ties to their family, household, religion, culture, and state. Faith influences the manner and extent to which an individual assimilates.

Muslims, Christians, and Jews all have different perspectives on God, according to Simms (2016). On the other hand, Christians and Jews living under Islamic governance are influenced by the intellectual stagnation of the surrounding Islamic culture (due to the subordination of reason to faith). The Western world's anti-family culture is a defining trait in the eyes of the [im]migrant; the cost of integration into this culture is enormous. If religious [im]migrants have not subordinated reason to faith, they may come to believe that they will be unable to adjust until they make certain concessions. As a result, the morals and customs of many Middle Eastern Christians have deteriorated over time. These approaches have a distinct impact on a migrant's social life and integration into the host country. This is related to the concept that socioreligious policies have an impact on the shape of a migrant's life in a host culture. It influences how migrants integrate and their attachment to their home nations.

<sup>49</sup>K. Knott, *The Location of Religion: a Spatial Analysis* (London: Equinox, 2005).

<sup>50</sup>M. Oosterbaan, 'Public religion and urban space in Europe', *Social & Cultural Geography*, 15:6 (2014), pp. 591–602.

<sup>51</sup>G. Giordan and E. Pace (eds), *Religious Pluralism. Framing Religious Diversity in the Contemporary World* (Cham: Springer, 2014).

<sup>52</sup>James A. Beckford, 'Religions and migrations – old and new', *Quaderni di Sociologia*, 80 (2019), pp. 15–32.<https://doi.org/10.4000/qds.2599>

This refers to the relationship between the religious practices of migratory people in their home countries and their religious practices in destination nations. One of the most intriguing aspects of this study is how people perceive religious institutions. Migration and movement are two practices associated with spirituality, as is spirituality's inability to be contained and controlled.<sup>53</sup>

Religion has taken up a significant amount of space in migration and security issues, particularly in the case of Islam. Some organizations consider Muslim migrants a threat to traditional identities, religious peace in host communities, and community cohesion<sup>54, 55</sup>. Increasingly negative attitudes about Muslims and a growing fear of Islamic terrorism have led to increasingly negative attitudes toward migrants and overt xenophobia and violence in the worst-case scenario. However, researchers have revealed that these outcomes (stigma and discrimination) are not universal.<sup>56</sup>

Migration has transformed religious landscapes in many regions of the world. At some point throughout their journey, the migrant population rediscovers the importance of religion and embraces it as an identity marker, becoming more religiously involved in the new destination country than they were before migrating<sup>57, 58</sup>. According to Platt<sup>59</sup> (2014), immigrants are more spiritually aware as a result of being ostracized by the majority in their host nations. Kerala and the Philippines' Christians in the Gulf, Muslims in Western Europe, and Sikhs and Hindus in the UK, Canada, and the US are all examples of such events.<sup>60</sup> The significant impact of migration on Kuwait's religious landscape is astounding, with Christians now accounting for 14% of the population and Buddhists, Hindus, and Sikhs accounting for the remaining 11%<sup>61, 62</sup>. The Netherlands has a long history of immigration dating back to its colonial era. Immigrants from Turkey, Morocco, and, to a lesser extent, East Indian Netherlands (now Indonesia), Surinam, Afghanistan, and the Horn of Africa have established Islam as the second religion in the Netherlands.<sup>63</sup> Nearly one million members account for about 6% of the population, and there are 450 mosques dedicated to them.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>53</sup>P. Connor, 'Increase or Decrease? The Impact of the International Migratory Event on Immigrant Religious Participation', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 47:2 (2008), pp. 243–257.

<sup>54</sup>AKM Ahsan Ullah, 'Does Religion Facilitate or Impede Migration? A debate from Gender Perspective in Asia' in S. N. Amin, V. Ganepola, and L. Dissanayake (eds) *Changing Nature of Forced Migration* (Dhaka: University Press Ltd., 2016) pp. 357–87.

<sup>55</sup>R. Waagenvoorde, 'How Religion and Secularism (Don't) Matter in the Refugee Crisis', in L. Mavelli and E. K. Wilson (eds) *The Refugee Crisis and Religion* (London: Rowman and Littlefield International, 2017), pp. 61–74.

<sup>56</sup>M. S. Brown, 'Religion and Economic Activity in the South-Asian Population', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23:6 (2000), pp. 1035–1061.

<sup>57</sup>R. Falk, 'Refugees, Migrants and World Order' in L. Mavelli and E. K. Wilson (eds) *The Refugee Crisis and Religion* (London: Rowman and Littlefield International, 2017), pp. 23–34.

<sup>58</sup>J. Haynes, *Religion and Development: Conflict or Cooperation?* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007).

<sup>59</sup>L. Platt, 'Is There Assimilation in Minority Groups? National, Ethnic and Religious Identity?', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 37:1 (2014), pp. 46–70.

<sup>60</sup>M. Frederiks, 'Religion, Migration, and Identity a Conceptual and Theoretical Exploration', *Mission Studies*, 32:2 (2015), pp. 181–202.

<sup>61</sup>John Stanely, 'Conceptualizing Temporary Economic Migration to Kuwait: An Analysis of Migrant Churches Based on Migrant Social Location', *Mission Studies*, 32:2 (2015), pp. 234–249.

<sup>62</sup>John Stanely, 'Transnational Ties of Indian Churches in the Arabian Gulf: Kerala Pentecostal Churches in Kuwait' in Sadiri Tira, and Tetsunao Yamamori (eds) *Scattered and Gathered* (Oxford: Regnum Publications, 2016).

<sup>63</sup>D. Jung, 'Islam as a Problem': Dutch Religious Politics in The East Indies', *Review of Religious Research*, 51:3, (2010), pp. 288–301. Retrieved January 6, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20697346>.

<sup>64</sup>K. Hertog, *The Complex Reality of Religious Peacebuilding* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010).

Religion is a major element of a migrant's personal identity, which leads to the formation of a belief system that incorporates many aspects of that religion's traditions, beliefs, and practices. These qualities influence migrants' behaviour and personal values, which influence how they interact with their host country. The religious aspect of a migrant's identity frequently becomes increasingly important in the host state, as it allows the migrant to maintain close contact with a recognizable part of their home in their new country, and even better contact with individuals in their home country through established religious transnational networks<sup>65,66</sup>. Katy Gardner<sup>67</sup> (1995) used the example of rural Bangladesh [in Sylhet], where migration has resulted in the rise of new wealthy families who are perceived to be challenging traditional religious authority. This perception has the potential to erode their new religious legitimacy (izaat), which they have achieved by mosque construction, costly gifts and tributes, and regular hajj (pilgrimage) performances, among other things.

Religion is prone to change as a result of international migration and network formation. States are sovereign, and as such, they tend to have a strong influence on the scope and character of migrants' transnational religious practices... [where] they regulate movement and religious expression and thus have a strong influence on the scope and character of migrants' transnational religious practices<sup>68</sup>. Migrants bring with them a variety of religions, ideas, practices, identities, and social capital, leading to the establishment of transnational religions.<sup>69</sup>

Increased religiosity among migrants, on the other hand, isn't always a bad thing. Whether a 'migrant's religious identity becomes a useful or destructive element for the personal integration process' is largely based on the host nation's existing economic, social, and political support networks.<sup>70</sup> Visiting churches, mosques, and temples in a new country is also considered as a source of tranquillity and a way to reduce stress and breakdowns.

We provide the following examples of religion causing a divide between religious migrants and locals of the host nation (resulting in adverse effects on the migrant's personal integration process) based on one of our respondents' experiences: 'During a time of despair, a fellow student at the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) in Thailand helped me.' His name is still fresh in my memory. He was always seen wearing a long shirt known as a Punjabi (believed to be tied with religiosity). A crimson patch of his shirt was used to help AIT colleagues identify him. People imagined he patched up his white shirt with a red rag. I enquired about the mystery at some point. He answered flatly that he didn't worry if the extra portion didn't match the original shirt colour because our Prophet (PBUH) didn't even have a good shirt to wear. This faced me with a fresh dilemma because I was under the assumption that maintaining decency

<sup>65</sup> A.K.M Ahsan Ullah, and M.S Haque, *The Migration Myth in Policy and Practice: Development, Dream and Despair* (Singapore: Springer, 2020).

<sup>66</sup> A.K.M Ahsan Ullah, and A.A.A. Kumpoh, 'Diaspora community in Brunei: Culture, ethnicity and integration', *Diaspora Studies*, 11:3 (2018), pp. 14–33.

<sup>67</sup> Katy Gardner, 'Keeping Connected: Security, Place, and Social Capital in a 'Londoni' Village in Sylhet', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 14:3 (2008), pp. 477–95.

<sup>68</sup> P. Levitt, 'You Know, Abraham Was Really the First Immigrant': Religion and Transnational Migration', *International Migration Review*, 37:3 (2003), pp. 847–873.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> N. Foner, and R. Alba, 'Immigrant Religion in the U.S. and Western Europe: Bridge or Barrier to Inclusion?' *International Migration Review*, 42:2 (2008), pp. 360–392.

was also an important instruction from the Prophet. I feel the Prophet would not appreciate it when his followers are mocked. It was yet another instance of an individual's internal conflict. I kept asking myself, 'Is it the faith or the individual who is to blame here?'

Some religious headgears are symbols of religious connection, such as the kippah in Judaism, the dastar in Sikhism, and the veil or turban in Islam.<sup>71</sup> Attachment to such symbols is regarded as the immigrant's level of acculturation in host communities, and failures to integrate in local [host] cultures are frequently referred to as failures to assimilate.<sup>72</sup> Becker (1971) and Spence<sup>73</sup> (1973) argue that in so-called secularized Western countries, conservatism and backwardness are adjectives used to express a solid devotion to religious activity. This is frequently misconstrued as a lack of desire to assimilate into host cultures, and it acts as a vehicle for anti-immigrant prejudice.

One of our interviewees told us about an unexpected encounter she had while practicing Islam in her host country. She and her husband live in Arezzo, Italy, with their in-laws. She is a devoted Muslim who dresses in the Niqab, a veil that covers the entire body according to Islamic law. Her family's male members have open space on the ground floor of their building where they can pray. They shared an apartment with two locals (two sisters). These neighbours made fun of her for wearing a Niqab, which they thought was odd. They used to have frequent visits from these sisters (neighbours). When her husband or father-in-law (both immigrants) stood to pray, these two sisters crossed in front of them as if they hadn't seen anyone prostrating (Sajdah). It was made clear to them that they were not to do so while praying. When a person stands to pray, it is considered that no one should walk or cross in front of him or her. It highlights how migrants face difficulties maintaining their religious practices when the host society does not appreciate the migrants' religion or culture.

'I was one of many visitors to the mosque at AIT,' another responds. My visits used to provide me with a sense of relief from my homesickness. Even if a migrant's religion is practiced in their home country, religious norms vary widely between countries, so they may discover that it is taught, understood, and practiced differently in their new country. For example, at a single prayer meeting, I noticed that people from South East Asia pray differently from people from South Asia and Central Asia. 'This means that the religion's message was conveyed to different locales in different ways, depending on who travelled to those areas on a religious journey. As a result, migrants may be exposed to societies with different customs or belief systems than the migrants' place of origin'<sup>74</sup>.

Despite the fact that religious conventions vary by state and country, many migrants work even harder to maintain their religious standards and practices in the host country. As a result, they frequently resort to forming a private social network of others who share their views. When migrants of the same faith arrive in a host country, they usually develop a social network with others who share their religion and identity. This helps migrants keep links with their home nations since they have access to others from the

<sup>71</sup>D. S. Patel, 'Concealing to Reveal: The Information Role of Islamic Dress', *Rationality and Society*, 24:3 (2012), pp. 295–323.

<sup>72</sup>I. Kogan, E. Fong, and J. G. Reitz, 'Religion and integration among immigrant and minority youth', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 46:17 (2019), pp. 3543–3558 doi:10.1080/1369183X.2019.1620408.

<sup>73</sup>G. Becker, *The Economics of Discrimination*. 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971).

<sup>74</sup>Pace Enzo, *Religion as Communication: God's Talk* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011).

same or comparable cultures who maintain transnational networks and may even report back to people in the home country on how well the migrant is upholding the culture and religion of home. For example, when a Bengali-Muslim guy attends a mosque in Thailand, it gives the impression to his fellow citizens that he has not integrated into Thai society, which is known as an 'open sex' country, at least in his country. This visit protects them from negative rumours about him in his home country.

'I recall one of my Iranian students at Saint Mary's University in Canada who enrolled in my South Asian history and development course,' another respondent remarked. She came to see me one day to talk about her final essay. I was interested in the topic on which she planned to write her essay. She begins talking about 'Bahai and migration.' To be honest, when she stated Bahai, I had no idea what she meant. I encouraged her to go ahead talking about it more. Throughout our conversation, I became convinced that Bahai was the name of religion. Then it gave me opportunities to continue our conversation in a meaningful way. I asked what drew her interest in working on this project. She claimed to be a Bahai. 'Their family was forced out of Iran,' she said in her own voice. Many Bahais emigrated to avoid persecution, and worse consequences as their religious affiliation became known. Those who chose to identify as such faced repeated harassment, dismissal from work, trade and commercial boycott. One of them belonged to a family member of one of my students.

Forced migration may be caused by religious repression.<sup>75</sup> Many religious communities, notably British Puritans, French Huguenots, Dutch Mennonites, and European Jews, have historically chosen departure as a response against government tyranny<sup>76,77</sup>. For example, the Baha'is are one of the world's most persecuted religious minorities. For about 150 years, Baha'is have been persecuted in Iran due to their religion. Due to the restrictions in their lives, they have been compelled to relocate to other countries<sup>78,79</sup>. The extermination of Jews resulted in the evacuation of Jews during World War II. The term 'anti-Semitism' has become synonymous with religion. Religious repression is on the rise, with governments in around 29 percent of the world's countries imposing significant restrictions on religious practice.<sup>80</sup>

State-sanctioned religious repression frequently exacerbates forced migration. Individuals and groups whose beliefs and practices are targeted by government-imposed religious restrictions — predominantly religious minorities, but also, in some situations, the religious majority — are more likely to flee than if religious persecution did not exist.<sup>81</sup> The Tibetan Diaspora began in 1961, when China attempted to acquire control of the region, causing thousands of refugees to migrate to Nepal.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>75</sup>AKM Ahsan Ullah, *Refugee politics in the Middle East and North Africa: Human rights, safety and identity* (London: Palgrave McMillan, 2014).

<sup>76</sup>M. Kolbe, and P. S. Henne, 'The Effect of Religious Restrictions on Forced Migration', *Politics and Religion* 7:4 (2014), pp. 665–683.

<sup>77</sup>G. B. Walker, and S. E. Daniels, 'Foundation of Natural Resource Conflict: Conflict theory and Public Policy', in B. Solberg and S. Mina (eds) *Conflict Management and Public Participation in Land Management* (Proceeding No. 14. European Forest Institute, 1997), pp. 13–37.

<sup>78</sup>F. Kazemzadeh, 'The Baha'is in Iran: Twenty Years of Repression', *Social Research*, 67:2 (2000), pp. 537–558.

<sup>79</sup>M. Talebi, and M. Desjardins, 'The Immigration Experience of Iranian Baha'is in Saskatchewan: The Reconstruction of Their Existence, Faith, and Religious Experience', *Journal of Religion and Health*, 51:2 (2012), pp. 293–309.

<sup>80</sup>Pew Research Center, *Religious Hostilities Reach Six-Year High* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2014).

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid*, 2014.

<sup>82</sup>Neelam Shahi, 'Livelihood Patterns of the Tibetan Refugees in Kathmandu', *KMC Research Journal*, 2:2 (2018), pp. 71–94. <https://doi.org/10.3126/kmcjr.v2i2.29951>.

## Conclusions and discussions

We demonstrated how individual religious rites and practices are preserved in destination countries and how they relate to academic discourse; the difference between Islam and political Islam; who defines them; and political Islam as a political ideology, now referred to in our analysis as Islamism, political Islam, and politicization of Islam.<sup>83</sup> Political Islam debates include the current dynamics of revivalism, fundamentalism, radicalism, and militancy.

Religion is undeniably both a push and a pull factor in migration. For a variety of reasons, Muslim countries in Southeast Asia and the Middle East have drawn a large number of migrants. However, the majority of these were economic migrants who took advantage of the opportunity to live and work in Muslim countries. In contrast, many Muslim migrants chose to settle in non-Muslim countries such as Australia, Canada, and the United States. Similarly, a large number of non-Muslims go to Muslim countries in quest of better economic possibilities. As a result, migrants rationalize their migration decisions on the basis of political, economic, and religious considerations. The intriguing thing is that they carry with them their religious ideas, customs, and way of life, enhancing the destination countries by exposing new cultures to the natives and creating social cohesion via peaceful coexistence.

Despite the fact that nations are sovereign, and have the capacity to enact and enforce their own laws, a global religious law or treaty that organizes and protects migrants' socioreligious rights in host cultures is vital. An international body of work of this nature would serve as a framework to ensure that migrants in host countries are provided at least some basic socioreligious and civic rights. Participating in politics is one way for migrants to ensure that their socioreligious traditions and rights are respected in their host countries. Islam is now a major topic of global political discourse. The political usage of Islam has placed the religion in a highly controversial arena in theology, sociology, and global politics.<sup>84</sup>

Interactions between individuals from distinct religious backgrounds and their host countries have a rich and vibrant history. Many studies have given insight on the various ways faiths have contributed to the causes of migration and the responses to the consequences of migration. We suggest that more research be conducted on a number of under-researched aspects of the connection between migration and religion. Gender and generational differences that play a key role in defining the interrelationships between migration and religion merits further research. Forced migration and the role of religion and religious organization is another important aspect that warrants deeper research. Further research would be critical to advance the understanding of how freedom from religion and religious freedom may shape migration differently.

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<sup>83</sup>M. Lyck-Bowen, and M. A Owen, 'Multi-religious response to the migrant crisis in Europe: A preliminary examination of potential benefits of multi-religious cooperation on the integration of migrants', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 45:1 (2019), pp. 21–41, DOI: 10.1080/1369183X.2018.1437344

<sup>84</sup>R. G. Wirsing, Political Islam, Pakistan And the Geo-Politics of Religious Identity. Chapter 3. *Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, Department of Defense*. The U.S. Government (2008).

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