



ISLAMIST JIHAD, THREAT TO HUMANITY

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Bloody attack on Charlie Hebdo a turning point in Islamist terror; Forced conversions, Muslim economic dominance, socio-cultural shifts imminent with open democratic spaces, conversations to shrink

As per Islam, Jihad is 'holy war' against sins and considered religiously sanctioned warfare within Islamic teachings enjoining good and forbidding the evil.

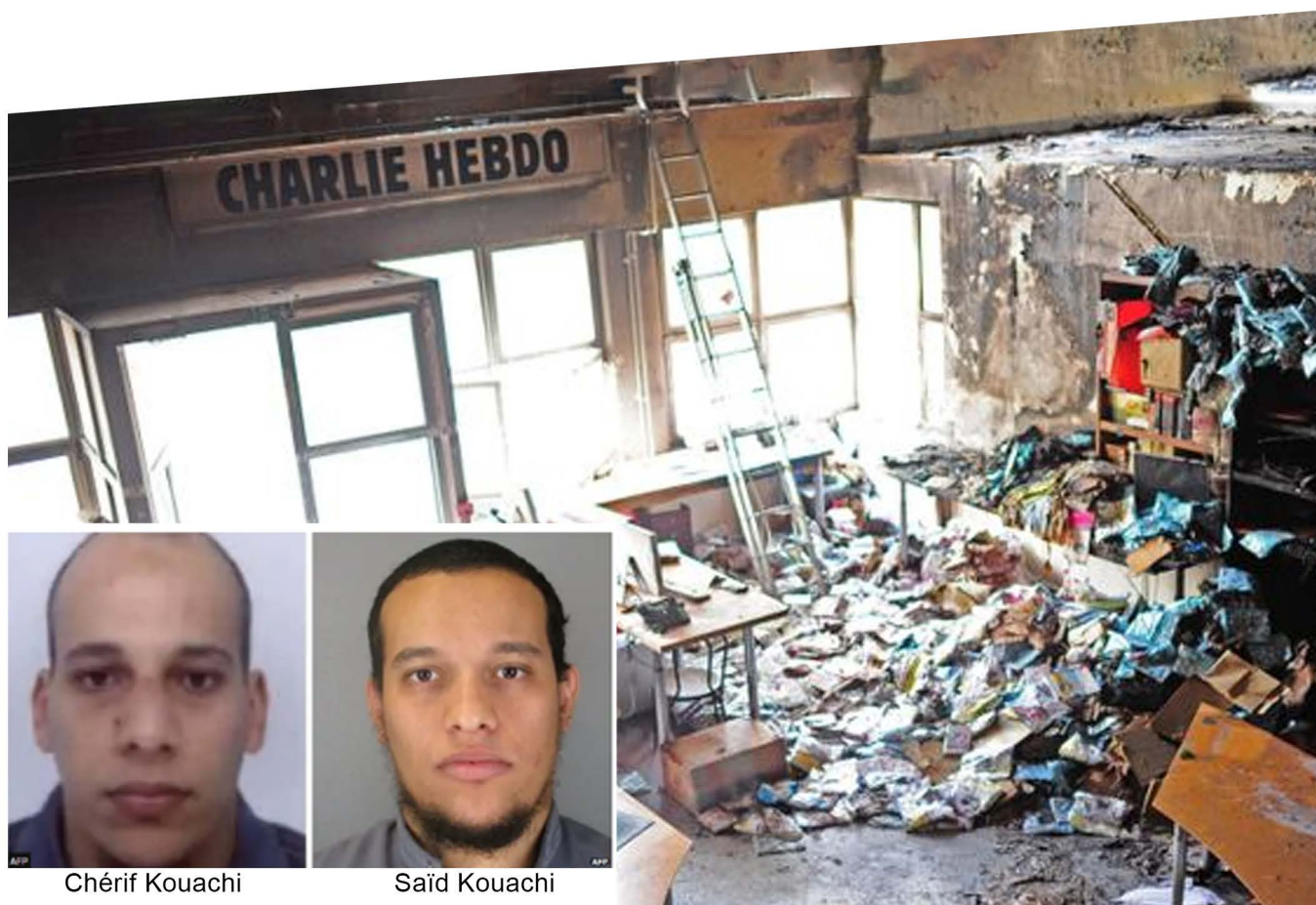
But, today's jihadists have time and again resorted to gun-attacks, targeted democratic institutions, elected parliaments propagating that it is sanctioned by the God within Islam. Jihadist attack by two Muslim brothers on Charlie Hebdo, popular French satirical weekly office on January 7, 2015 spoke volumes about the terror unleashed by Islamists in the name of holy war.

This gory incident re-emphasizes Islamist jihad's constant and increasing menace to the contemporary world. Islamic terrorists aiming to instill terror and stifle democratic voices massacred 12 people including the magazine's leading cartoonists Cabu, Wolinski, Charb and Tignous.

What was the crime Charlie Hebdo committed against Islam? The magazine published a cartoon on Prophet Mohammad angering the terror indoctrinated fundamentalists thereby waging a war on Charlie Hebdo.

This horrific act exposed the radicalized networks within Islam that resorted to anti-human and anti-democratic terror activities in the name of holy war.

Terror attack on Charlie Hebdo not only stunned the free western world but the entire humanity that's wedded to freedom of expression. This attack also was a milestone in bringing about further schism between Western world and Islamist elements operating globally with impunity.



Voices around the world grew louder against growing threat of '(un) holy war' in the name of religion.

It marked the start of a new era of jihad in which international extremism transcended boundaries and used freedom to subvert freedom.

Charlie Hebdo's offices were marred by bloodshed which served as a warning and indication of a conflict between open societies and those who were willing to use violence and terror to impose their beliefs.

This tragedy also brings up unsettling realities about how civilizations respond to radicalism. Although nothing excuses their savagery, neglecting the underlying reasons for such violence leaves the door open for it to happen again.

Furthermore, it forces democracies to consider whether they can uphold right to free speech while promoting diversity and resolving structural injustices.

Fueled by ideological, political, and socioeconomic forces, terrorism has existed throughout history and is neither a new phenomenon nor limited to some places.

Western world was forced to address terrorism as a direct threat to its security, which sparked the so-called "Global War on Terror." Events such as London bombings, Charlie Hebdo incident in France and 9/11 in US simply brought the issue to fore.

But the problem goes much beyond these well-publicized incidents including the two blood shedding attacks on Bharat's financial capital Mumbai.

Given recent studies on anticipated global rise of Islam by 2050, it is imperative to acknowledge the complex and profound origins of terrorism. This is especially true in light of the need to develop inclusive counterterrorism strategies that tackle the root causes of Islamic extremism as well as its symptoms.



By 2100, it is expected that there will be 10.4 billion people on the planet with Sub-Saharan Africa accountable for most of this rise.

However, countries with lowest levels of development will be the ones driving future population growth; by the 2080s, Nigeria's population, which is currently less than one-third that of Europe, is predicted to overtake the entire continent.

From 248 million to 670 million, Muslim population is predicted to increase at a whopping 170 per cent as against 115 per cent of Christians.

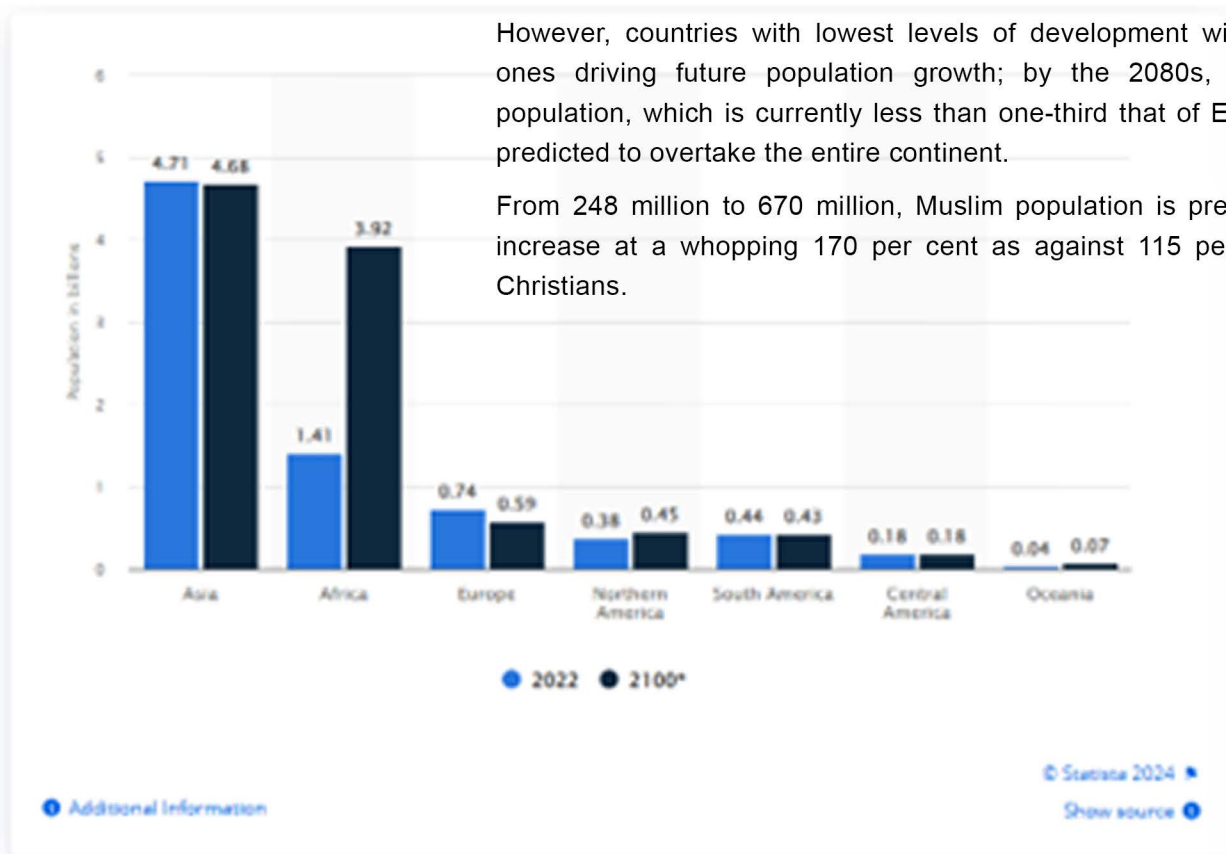


Figure 2: Forecast of the world population in 2022 and 2100, by continent (in billions)

Overall number of Christians in sub-Saharan Africa is predicted to fall from 63 per cent in 2010 to 59 per cent in 2050, yet the region's total Christian population is predicted to increase by that time. In the meantime, it is anticipated that the Muslim percentage would rise from 30 per cent to 35 per cent.

Size and Projected Growth of Major Religious Groups in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2010-2050

	2010 ESTIMATED POPULATION	% IN 2010	2050 PROJECTED POPULATION	% IN 2050	POPULATION GROWTH 2010-2050	% INCREASE 2010-2050	COMPOUND ANNUAL GROWTH RATE (%)
Christians	517,320,000	62.9%	1,112,390,000	58.5%	595,070,000	115.0%	1.9%
Muslims	248,420,000	30.2	669,710,000	35.2	421,290,000	169.6	2.5
Folk Religions	27,010,000	3.3	61,470,000	3.2	34,470,000	127.6	2.1
Unaffiliated	26,240,000	3.2	50,460,000	2.7	24,220,000	92.3	1.6
Other Religions	1,920,000	0.2	3,740,000	0.2	1,830,000	95.3	1.7
Hindus	1,560,000	0.2	1,900,000	0.1	340,000	21.6	0.5
Buddhists	160,000	< 0.1	220,000	< 0.1	60,000	38.1	0.8
Jews	100,000	< 0.1	70,000	< 0.1	-30,000	-28.9	-0.8
Regional total	822,730,000	100.0	1,899,960,000	100.0	1,077,230,000	130.9	2.1

Source: The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050. Population estimates are rounded to the nearest 10,000. Percentages are calculated from unrounded numbers. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

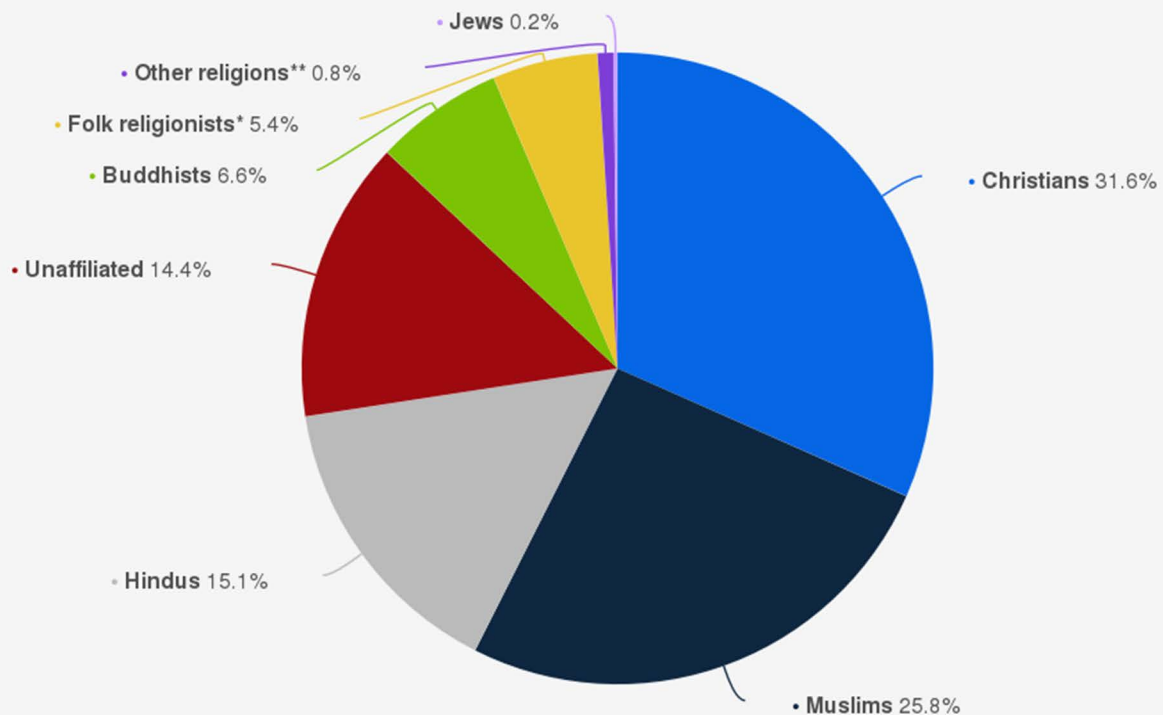
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Islam's projected global rise by 2050 is a transition with significant geopolitical, socioeconomic, and cultural ramifications in addition to being a demographic issue. Governance, social integration, interfaith discussion, and international peace and security are all affected by this tendency. Islam is projected to expand more quickly than any other religion over the next few decades, becoming

a significant global force by the middle of the century, according to Pew Research and other demographic studies.

This analysis will examine main forces behind this expansion, as well as any possible effects on world politics, the economy and social dynamic in the backdrop growing Islamist terror in recent years.

Share of global population affiliated with major religious groups in 2022, by religion



Sources

Pew Research Center; CIA; World Bank; Statista; Statista Survey
 © Statista 2024

Additional Information:

Worldwide; Pew Research Center; CIA; World Bank; Statista; Statista Survey



DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AND FERTILITY RATES

Demographic trends and transitions, often ignored, have significant effects on modern society. A macro level knowledge of demography can help address issues like resource scarcity, migration crises and climate change.

Almost seventy percent of the world's population lives in Asia and Latin America and many of these countries are nearing the completion of their demographic transitions which means that population growth is slowing down. With countries like Thailand, China, and Colombia having lower fertility rates and life expectancies that are on par with or higher than those in the US, preconceived ideas about "developed" and "developing" civilizations are currently being questioned.

Sub-Saharan Africa is experiencing a sharp drop in birth rates as all of its nations undergo demographic transitions, despite being the least demographically developed region in the world at the moment.

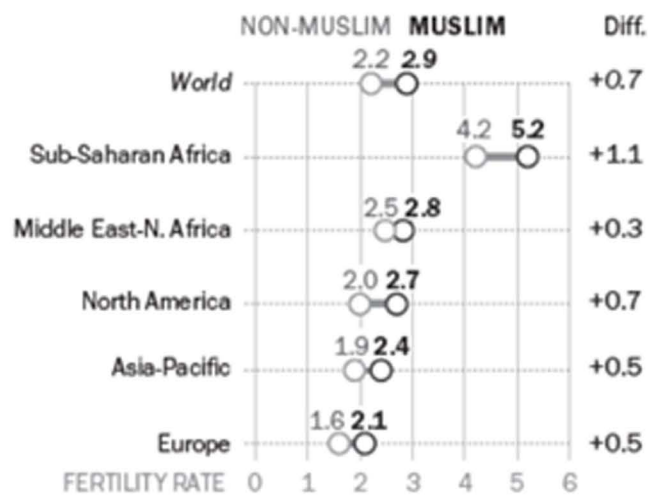
Main driver of Islam's anticipated growth is demographic momentum. From an anticipated 3.45 million adherents in 2017 to an estimated 8.1 million in 2050, Islam may be the main religion with highest rate of growth, according to Pew Research data, perhaps matching or possibly surpassing Christianity.

High fertility rates in Muslim-majority areas especially in the Middle East, North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa are mostly responsible for this growth. With millions of people reaching reproductive age over the next few decades, these areas have some of the youngest populations in the world guaranteeing a continuous population growth.

Spread of Islam is also influenced by migration trends, particularly in North America and Europe. Both immigration and comparatively high Muslim birth rates have contributed to growth of Muslim communities in these regions, particularly in nations with sizable Muslim populations in Africa, Middle East and parts of Asia.

Muslim and non-Muslim fertility rates, by region, 2015-2020

Estimated number of children per woman



Note: Latin America-Caribbean not shown due to lack of reliable data. Differences calculated based on unrounded numbers.

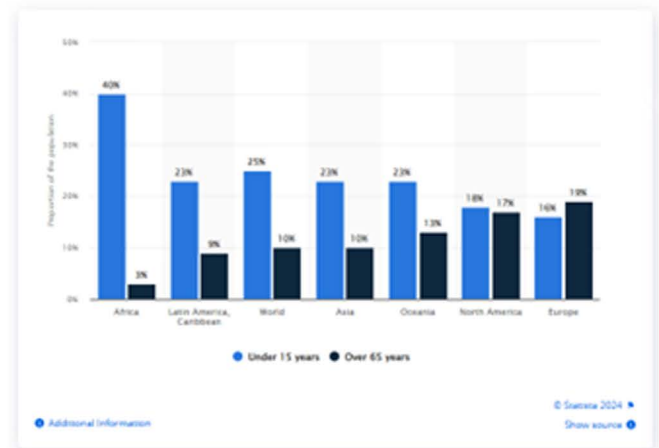
Source: Pew Research Center demographic projections. See Methodology for details.

"The Changing Global Religious Landscape"

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The populations of countries where Islam is predominant religion like Nigeria, Egypt, Pakistan and Indonesia are expanding faster than those of majority of Western nations. This demographic shift will influence policies, especially in multicultural societies, potentially sparking both efforts to integrate Islamic culture and increased socio-political tensions apart from jihadist terror.

Around 10 per cent people over 65 and 25 per cent under 15 make up the global population. Africa is the youngest continent in the world. The fact that 40 per cent of the population is under 15 and less than three per cent is over 65 illustrates the poor life expectancy in some of the continent's nations. On the other hand, a higher percentage of Europeans are over 65 than are younger than 15.



In general, the population of Muslim-majority nations is younger than that of ageing Western nations. Due to this youth bulge, growth may be sustained even if fertility rates slightly drop because there will still be a large number of births overall.

GEOPOLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

The rise of political movements aiming to incorporate Islamic principles into governing systems, particularly in the Middle East and some regions of Asia, has coincided with the growing number of Muslims worldwide. Countries like Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey, as they compete to dominate the Muslim world, are advancing their own interpretation of political Islam, which has an impact on regional dynamics. This is already being demonstrated in organisations like the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which aims to represent Muslim interests worldwide.

Persisted attacks in 2023 by Islamist insurgent groups IS Sahel and JNIM in several African nations, including Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, saw killing of more than 1700 people, according to experts, especially in districts that border Mali. The Christian community in Douna, Mali was under attack from violent insurgents who prohibited worshippers from congregating and praying in churches, ringing bells, or playing musical instruments.

While insurgents in Douna frequently called on Christians to convert to Islam and threatened to use violence if they didn't, IS Sahel rebels started enforcing hudud punishments in Gao and northeast Mali. In a village near Burkina Faso border in Niger in June, 69 families fled their houses because of threats of killing by insurgents for refusing to convert to Islam.

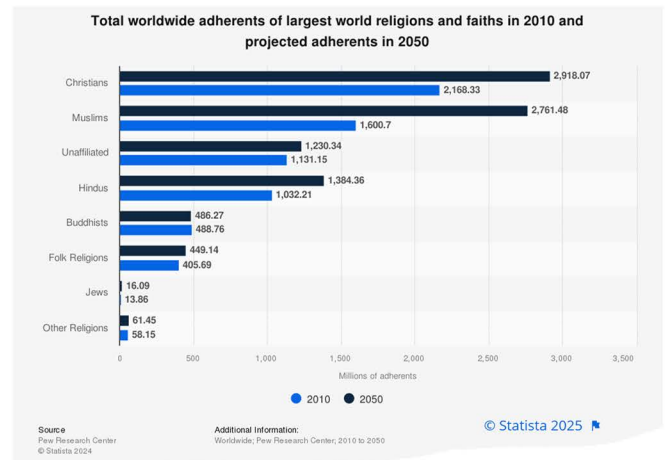
Throughout 2023, deadly Islamist insurgent group al-Shabaab remained active in the Horn of Africa and declared that any public religious practice would be unsafe because it would kill any avowed Christians, including by suicide bombing. This group has a very active cell in Kenya also.

"The growing weight of the Islamist agenda in law-making and in many spheres of the administration, including through an extension of the influence of the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) in the education system" was a concern raised by the European Parliament in July.

Governments controlled by ethnic and religious groups in South and Southeast Asia made use of social differences for their own political ends. The State Administration Council of the military junta in Burma made an attempt at KEY International Developments Blasphemy laws, which punish acts or expressions judged offensive or insulting to religious feelings, figures, or symbols with the death sentence, forced labour, incarceration, or fines, continue to be one of the biggest threats to religious freedom. In August, it suspended elections indefinitely and used the sponsorship of Buddhism to legitimise its power

(USCIRF | ANNUAL REPORT 2024 77).

Islam's impact on foreign policy, alliances, and even national policies may change as the number of Muslims in Western nations rises. In nations like the US, Canada, and other European countries, Muslim populations are becoming more involved in politics and supporting anti-discrimination, immigration, and international relations policies. The political power of



Muslims in the West is increasing along with their demographic. This political power might change foreign policy priorities by 2050, especially with regard to Middle Eastern and African nations, giving them more clout on matters like Palestine, Kashmir, and the rights of Muslim minorities. If Muslim-majority nations band together on particular topics, this influence might change the balance of power in the UN and other international organisations and could even challenge Western-dominated narratives.

CULTURAL EVOLUTION OF ISLAM

Practice and understanding of Islam may change as it spreads throughout the world. Traditional Islamic customs will encounter a variety of cultural norms in multicultural settings which could result in reforms or hybrid customs that are exclusive to expatriate populations. On the other hand, conflicts between conservative and liberal groups within Muslim communities as well as a rise in sectarianism could result from the conflict between orthodox and reformist ideas inside Islam.

Education, media, and technology will all influence how Islam develops in the future. Muslim youth who have access to international platforms are becoming more conscious of the various ways that Islam is interpreted and practiced, which could lead to a challenge to strict orthodoxies and the emergence of alternative religious expressions. On the other hand, the global dissemination of radical ideology has been made possible by digital platforms. Maintaining Islam's standing as a peaceful, diversified religion will require striking a balance between the influence of extremism and mainstream Islamic principles.

IMPACT OF ISLAMIC ORDER ON GLOBAL ECONOMY

Islamic economic system, based on Sharia law, places a strong emphasis on moral values including risk-sharing, interest-free banking (riba prohibition), and zakat (charity) as a means of redistributing income. Through the introduction of alternative frameworks to traditional finance, it has reshaped global markets by encouraging ethical investing and diversity. The \$3 trillion business of Islamic finance discourages speculative activity and encourages sustainable development through investments based on actual assets.

Limited scalability in non-Islamic nations because of disparate regulatory frameworks and difficulty of integrating with traditional banking pose obstacles. Despite this, the Islamic system's focus on morality and equity provides a strong framework for tackling the world's unsustainable debt cycles and growing economic disparity.

Percentage of the world's population that does not identify as religious (including self-identifying atheists, agnostics, and those who claim their religion is "nothing in particular") will decrease from 16 per cent in 2010 to 13 per cent in 2050, according to a 2015 global study published in Demographic Research and its associated Pew Research Centre report. Compared to the peak in the 1970s under communism, when over one in five persons were not associated with any religion, these are both much lower.

To provide a global perspective on the direction of future religious and economic development, the project uses the best available economic and religious data (see methodology). Its goal is not to establish a clear causal relationship between economic activity and religious behaviour. Rather, it aims to establish a link between self-reported religious membership and global economic situations. The analysis offers an international viewpoint on the current dynamics of religious organisations' relative numbers and economic clout as well as how these dynamics are anticipated to shift in the near and distant future.

The global religious landscape has changed and will continue to evolve. Compared to other major religious groups, the number of Muslims is increasing more quickly. Meanwhile, the growth of Christians is comparable to that of the world's population. As a percentage of the global population, the surviving religious and non-religious populations are becoming smaller. In conclusion, at least in terms of religious affiliation, our globe is growing significantly more religious and religiously diverse.

Meanwhile, nations that control the world's economy are changing dramatically. We may observe the emergence of new economies by merely examining GDP as a metric across nations from 1980 to 2050.

70 Years of Global Economic Change - 1980, 2010 and 2050

Top 5 economies by year according to GDP

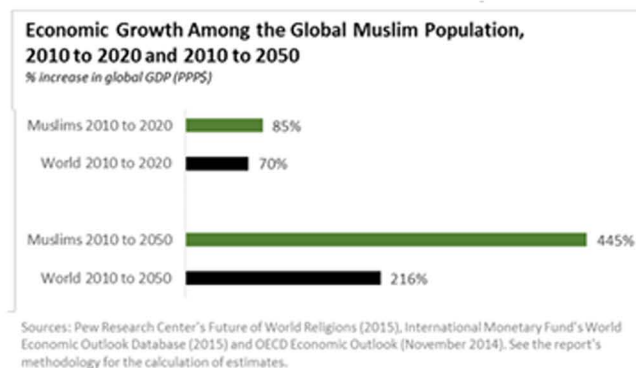
1980	2010	2050
United States	United States	China
Soviet Union	China	United States
Japan	Japan	India
West Germany	Germany	Japan
France	France	Indonesia

Sources: International Monetary Fund (1970, 2010), OECD long-range projections (2050)

In the upcoming years, the predominantly Christian United States will remain a powerful economic force. Nonetheless, emerging nations like China, which is primarily religiously agnostic, India, which is predominantly Hindu, and Indonesia, which is predominantly Muslim, are also anticipated to be significant economic forces in the decades to come. Therefore, higher economic influence from a wider range of religious backgrounds may indicate a stronger influence from religious diversity than in earlier decades.

Muslim communities are predicted to have access to an estimated 85 per cent more global GDP between 2010 and 2020 (see chart), rising from an estimated 14 trillion \$PPP to 25 trillion \$PPP. This GDP growth exceeds the 70 per cent global GDP growth forecast for 2010–2020. Between 2010 and 2050, there will likely be a similar trend of growth that is faster than the global average. The estimated global GDP growth

for Muslims is predicted to climb by 445 per cent over this time, while the global GDP is predicted to increase by 216 per cent.



The potential effects of economic expansion on religious affiliation levels are unknown. In nations that currently exhibit little progress towards disaffiliation, economic development may be accompanied by rising rates of religious disaffiliation. It should not be assumed, however, that every nation will adopt the European trend, which shows that religious disaffiliation rises with considerable economic development. This sequence has no known parallel in a nation with a majority of Muslims. Even though India is going through significant social upheaval, religious affiliation is still nearly universal in the Hindu-majority nation. Additionally, religious identity appears to have grown as China's economy has grown, even though it is challenging to evaluate religious change in the country based on the statistics currently available.

Even while the Islamic system combats corruption, the informal sector, and uncertainty, economic growth cannot improve if it is not implemented in an Islamic democratic framework, according to the MDPI review. Therefore, rather than implementing an abstract Islamic system, these Islamic nations should modify their Islamic practices and implement a democratic regime collectively, rather than reverting to a totalitarian regime.

IMPACT OF ISLAM ON INTERFAITH RELATIONS

Global discussions over Islamization's impact on societal integration and interfaith relations have been triggered by the spread of Islamic ideas. Although it is frequently presented as a resurgence of religious identity, its ramifications are significant.

The trust between religious groups is weakened by exclusivist ideologies that promote "us versus them" narratives. Secular frameworks are challenged by sharia-inspired governance, which marginalises minorities and heightens tensions. Islamist movements that promote cultural supremacy drive a wedge between Muslims and non-Muslims, further dividing society.

Societies become split as regional communities fight assimilation. Radicalisation and discrimination cycles are fueled by the politicisation of Islamic identity. Integration is hampered by conservative interpretations that are at odds with liberal ideals, particularly those pertaining to gender and LGBTQ+ rights.

Cross-border radical ideologies undermine interfaith unity. Sensationalised depictions stifle discourse and reinforce prejudice.

In heterogeneous communities, where identity preservation and cultural assimilation frequently clash, integrating Islamic beliefs with Western democratic values will be a constant challenge. Discrimination or Islamophobia brought on by unfavourable preconceptions about Islam can cause radicalisation and alienation in some areas.

Global culture has been impacted by the growing Muslim diaspora in many ways, ranging from the digital and media landscapes to fashion (modest fashion movements) and cuisine. Muslim musicians, social media influencers, and businesspeople have also become well-known, adding to Islam's visibility in the world's cultural narrative.



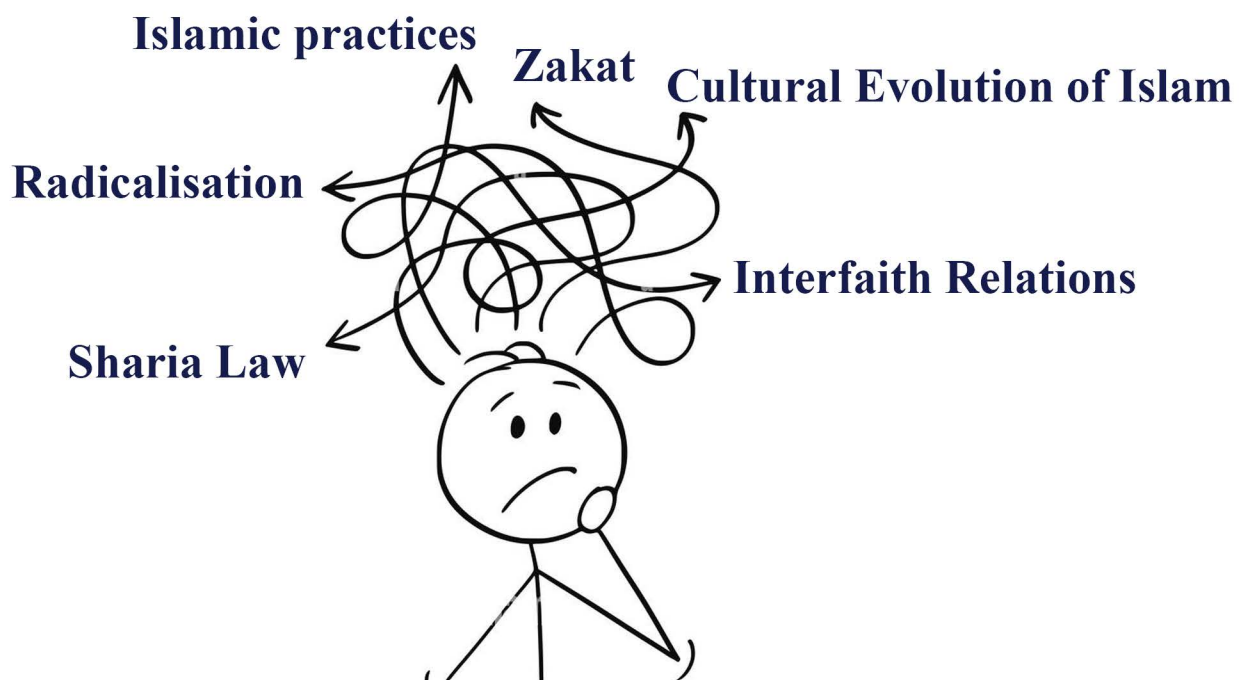
SECURITY CONCERN, GLOBAL PEACE

The emergence of Islam will also cause governments around the world to worry about security. Given that terrorist organisations frequently assert that they are representing Islamic objectives in spite of strong opposition from mainstream Muslim communities, the growing Muslim population may cause some people to worry about an increase in extremism. Distinguishing Islam from extremist ideas is essential because doing so only serves to increase hostility and prejudice. To stop extremism without stigmatising Muslim communities, governments and communities must adopt a balanced strategy that emphasises social integration and education.

WAY FORWARD

By 2050, spread of Islam will have affected many aspects of global society, necessitating thoughtful and intentional policymaking. It is not only a demographic trend. It poses difficulties with regard to security, political power relations, and social integration. To maintain societal cohesiveness and stop radicalisation, governments, civil society organisations, and religious leaders must cooperate.

Emergence of Islam has put the globe at a turning point. This demographic change has the potential to promote a more inclusive and peaceful global civilisation if it is handled carefully. But ignoring mutual respect and integration could cause polarisation and reinforce polarising preconceptions that could prevent the globe from embracing its diverse future. The success of Islam's worldwide integration by 2050 will reflect how well people can live together despite differences.



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