



“The world is undergoing a geopolitical restructuring and human transition on a scale which has not been seen for perhaps a thousand years.” Strategic analyst Gregory Copley, *Defense & Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy*, 3, 2016.

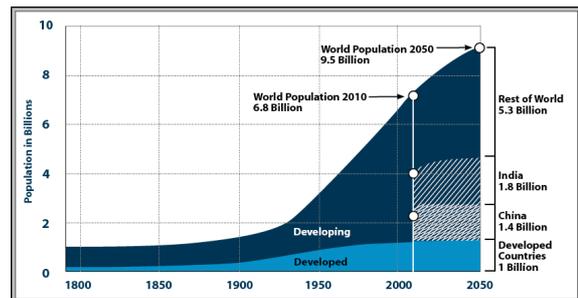
But the turbulence we are experiencing did not come “out of the blue”, nor did it develop overnight. Rather, this turbulence is the result of the confluence of some very significant 20th Century trends – mega-trends that were neither observed (missed on account of the trend towards micro-managing) or understood (due largely to historical and religious illiteracy and ignorance). Having been mismanaged or simply missed, these trends have now converged to create a perfect storm.

[image caption: Driven from their homes in Mosul, displaced Assyrian Christians find refuge in Iraqi Kurdistan. August 2014]

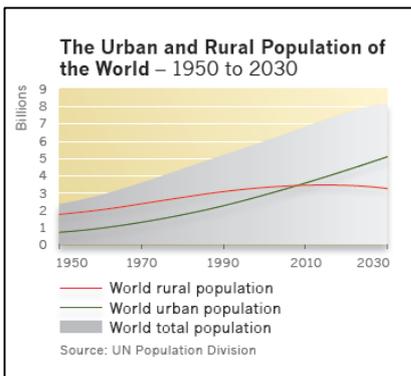
Post-war 20th C trends include:

Rapid Population Growth

Due to industrialisation and developments in medical technology, the global population has grown from less than 3 billion in 1950 to more than 6 billion by 2000 – with most growth being in the non-Western world.



Rapid Urbanisation



In 1950, around 30 percent of the global population lived in cities; by 2007 it was more than 50 percent (for the first time in world history). While the mega-cities of the developed world grew over centuries, the mega-cities of the developing world have grown within decades and without the infrastructure or institutions to sustain their populations. Consequently, the mega-cities of the developing world are largely lawless spaces, havens for criminals, where whole districts are ruled warlords, militias, mafias and terrorist organisations.

CASE: In 1941, Karachi (in Pakistan) was a fishing village, population 435,000. By 2014, Karachi was home to 23.7 million people, of whom 90 percent were immigrants (25 percent Pashtun) and 50 percent were slum-dwellers. Also home also to an estimated 40 million guns,



Karachi – like most mega-cities of the developing world – is “de-developing”, crumbling under its own weight.

[image caption: Karachi]

Mass Migrations

This includes not only the mass migrations of mostly traditional and religiously conservative people from rural areas into modern/progressive urban centres, but migrations across ethnic-religious “fault-lines” – including predatory migrations.

	Indigenous (%)	Non-indigenous (%)
1971	887,000 (96%)	36,000 (4%)
1990	1,215,897 (75%)	414,210 (25%)
2000	1,505,405 (68%)	708,425 (32%)
2005	1,558,795 (59%)	1,087,694 (41%)
2010	1,760,557 (49%)	1,852,297 (51%)
2020	2,112,681 (29%)	5,174,782 (71%)

Examples of predatory migrations across ethnic-religious fault-lines include: the southward migration of Muslim Fulani in Nigeria; Albanian Muslims into historically Christian Kosovo in the 1980s; Javanese Muslims into historically Christian Eastern

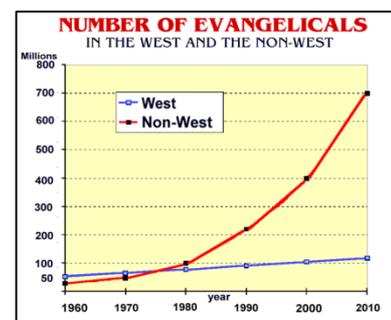
Indonesia (includes Papua) from the 1990s . . . and many more . . . including (dare I say) today’s mass migration of Muslims into historically Christian Europe. Predatory migrations are strategic, organised and driven by hostile forces with ambitions of their own.

These population trends converged through the latter part of the 20th Century to produce severe and escalating *social tensions*.

Meanwhile, the 20th Century also included several significant religious trends:

The Phenomenal Growth of Evangelical Christianity in the Non-Western World

In 1960s, the Church was around 80 percent white, middle class and Western. Most Christians lived in majority-Christian states with secular governments and a Judeo-Christian foundation (some fruits of which are security and religious liberty). These were safe environments, where Christians generally sat comfortably in the mainstream of culture.



Today, due primarily to the witness of indigenous believers throughout the developing world (the phenomenon of indigenous mission commences around 1960) the Church is now around 80 percent coloured, poor and non-Western. Consequently, there are now hundreds of millions of Christians (still tiny vulnerable minorities) living counter-cultural lives amidst Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist majorities and/or under totalitarian regimes, in states whose names are synonymous with repression, corruption, and human rights abuses.



The Rise of Religious Nationalism

Religious nationalism (e.g. *Hindutva* in India) initially rose as a means to resist and challenge colonialism. In the post-colonial era, ambitious politicians in emerging democracies quickly learned how to play the religion card for political gain. No longer needed as a means to rally the masses against the “demon” of colonial power, religious nationalism is now used as a means to dragnet the majority vote by rallying the masses against the “demon” religious minorities – deemed a threat to social cohesion and national security.



[image caption: India’s democratically elected Hindu Nationalist Prime Minister, Narendra Modi.]

* Revival of fundamentalist Islam

Having allied with the Germans in WWI – after which the Allies carved up the Arab lands, and Atatürk dissolved the Caliphate – Muslims then allied with the Nazis in WWII only to suffer a second humiliating defeat. Through the 1970s, social tensions and mass disaffection converged with Islamic reformation to produce Islamic Revolution.

In February 1979, the Shi’ite Islamic revolution in Iran catapulted Shi’ite clerics from the margins into the centre of power. The Shia revival had begun! The attempted Sunni revolution in Saudi Arabia, though it failed -- having been put down in December 1979 by French Special Forces -- had much the same result. Since November 1979 the Wahabbi clerics have dictated policy from behind the benign facade of the US-allied House of Saud. The Sunni revival had begun!



The events of 1979 served to heighten Islamic zeal and widen the gap between Sunnis and Shi’ites; between Islamic traditionalists/fundamentalists and modernisers/ liberals; and between Islam and non-Islam/infidelity. [*This*, not “Islamophobia”, is the reason why so many long-peaceful blended communities and multi-cultural societies are now tearing apart.]

[image caption: Muslims celebrate after purging Christians from Joseph Colony, Lahore, Pakistan, March 2013]

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As social tensions converged with religious tensions, competition for and conflicts over land, resources, jobs and power increasingly came to be expressed in religious terms and fought along religious lines.

The escalation of religious persecution and violence did not go unnoticed.

On 27 October 1998, the US Congress passed the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, which tied international religious freedom to US foreign policy. The US IRF Act (1998) gave dictators a reason to reign in hostile elements and enact reforms so as to avoid US sanctions and facilitate US trade and aid.

But the US IRF Act (1998) only had teeth as long as the US had economic leverage. Thus the financial collapse of August 2008 seriously undermined, if not totally destroyed the power of the US IFR Act. No longer would human rights-violators and religious liberty-abusing dictators have any reason to risk aggravating their own increasingly-radicalised masses and fuelling domestic tensions in pursuit of US-appeasing reforms. The veil of protection that US economic and military leverage had provided had been stripped away leaving vulnerable religious minorities -- especially the developing world's growing Christian communities -- exposed and vulnerable before a rising tide of militant religious nationalism, intolerant Islamic fundamentalism, and brutal atheistic totalitarianism.



[image caption: Sanjiang Church, Wenzhou, China, demolished by Chinese Communist Party, 30 April 2014.]



As the financial crisis spread around the globe, domestic unrest erupted as local economic distress took hold. Abusive regimes responded to the challenge in their usual way: by ramping up repression and cracking down on dissent, while scapegoating expendable elements (such as the Christian minority) and playing the religion card for political gain -- all with complete impunity.

[image caption: Pastor Behnam Irani, one of many Christian pastors now imprisoned in Iran.]

After a decade of restraint, the gloves are off!

These are days of *Realpolitik* and of asymmetric conflict (which relies on psychological operations and propaganda). Thanks to internet technologies, these are also days of unprecedented openness, when news can be followed in real time; when both information and disinformation can be spread in a heartbeat; and when rage can be spread, momentum built, and protests organised rapidly and effectively through social media.

The great need of the day is for discernment – and that requires knowledge and understanding of geography, history, religion, geo-politics, strategic trends and the times in which in live.

Welcome to the website of Religious Liberty Analyst, Elizabeth Kendal.