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FOCUS
Migration and Religion in International law: Research-based Proposals for Inclusive, Resilient, and Multicultural Societies

This focus is the final output of the research project of national interest Migration and Religion in International Law (MiReIL). Research-based Proposals for Inclusive, Resilient, and Multicultural Societies*, funded by the Italian Ministry of University and Research and by the European Union – NextGenerationEU in the framework of the "Piano nazionale di ripresa e resilienza (PNRR)"*

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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE FOCUS ON MIGRATION AND RELIGION IN INTERNATIONAL LAW: RESEARCH-BASED PROPOSALS FOR INCLUSIVE, RESILIENT, AND MULTICULTURAL SOCIETIES

Giuseppe Pascale*

SUMMARY: 1. The Intertwinement between Migration, Religion, and International Law. – 2. The International Protection of Freedom of Religion in the Countries of Origin of Migrants. – 3. The Legal Relationship between Religion and Asylum. – 4. The Social Integration of Religious Migrants in the Countries of Destination, with a Special Focus on European Countries. – 5. Non-native Religious Minorities and the Search for International Norms concerning their Protection. – 6. The Need to Address the Intertwinement between Migration, Religion, and International Law according to an Intersectional and Multidisciplinary Approach. – 7. The MiReIL Research Project.

1. The Intertwinement between Migration, Religion, and International Law

Migration and religion have always been intertwined. This intertwinement can be traced back to the modern age and the first half of the contemporary age, when religious minorities were often persecuted in their home countries and forced to migrate. In this context, international norms concerning the treatment of religious minorities soon emerged. Although these norms were primarily intended to maintain international peace and foster trade activities, religious minorities in any case benefited from them in a form of *ante litteram* human rights protection.

As a way of illustration only, the famous 1555 Treaty of Augsburg proclaimed that subjects had to profess the same religion as their sovereigns (*cuius regio eius religio*). However, it also granted religious minorities the right to move to another State whose sovereign professed their same religion, establishing a corresponding international

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obligation for that sovereign to accommodate them. Furthermore, in the event of transfers of territories, the inhabitants of the transferred territory were allowed to continue practising their religion, even if it differed from that of the new ruler.[1]

Today, as in the past, many individuals and groups are oppressed in their own countries because of their religion and are forced to migrate abroad. It also happens that individuals who leave their country for reasons other than religion are then unable to integrate into their countries of destination for reasons related to their religion. In the current globalised world, religion has remained a key element of identity.

2. The International Protection of Freedom of Religion in the Countries of Origin of Migrants

Freedom of religion should almost always be protected in the countries of origin of migration flows. Suffice it to remember that most States are obliged to abide by the human rights treaties that they have ratified and to implement them in their domestic legal systems. It is well known that many human rights treaties also ensure the protection of freedom of religion.[2]

First and foremost, it is to be recalled that the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights enshrines freedom of religion under Art. 18. Furthermore, given that many migrants flee African or Asian States for religious reasons, and more in general the majority of people who are forced to migrate worldwide usually come from the Global South, it is also important to emphasise that certain treaty norms are specifically devoted to protecting freedom of religion in these areas. This is the case with Art. 8 of the 1981 African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and Art. 30 of the 2004 Arab Charter on Human Rights.

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[1] The Treaty of Augsburg was concluded on 25 September 1555 between the federative states of the Holy Roman Empire and was then converted into imperial law by Emperor Ferdinand I of Habsburg. With regard to religious minorities, it partly echoed the previous Treaty of Passau, concluded on 15 August 1552 between Emperor Charles V of Habsburg and Elector Maurice of Saxony. The provisions on the protection of religious minorities contained in these treaties are reported in M. TOSCANO, *Le minoranze di razza, di lingua, di religione nel diritto internazionale*, Turin, 1931, p. 11 ff.

[2] A great number of bibliographic references can be found with regard to the protection of freedom of religion under international law. Among others, see the seminal articles by T.J. GUNN, *The Complexity of Religion and the Definition of "Religion" in International Law*, in *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, 2003, p. 190 ff., and C. FOCARELLI, *Evoluzione storica e problemi attuali del diritto alla libertà religiosa*, in *Diritti umani e diritto internazionale*, 2008, p. 229 ff. Also see the essays collected in J.D. VAN DER VYVER, J. WITTE (eds.), *Religious Human Rights in Global Perspective*, The Hague, 1996; J.F. FLAUSS (ed.), *La protection internationale de la liberté religieuse*, Brussels, 2002; M. EVANS, P. PETKOFF, J. RIVERS (eds.), *Changing Nature of Religious Rights under International Law*, Oxford, 2015; M. LUGATO (ed.), *La libertà religiosa secondo il diritto internazionale e il conflitto globale dei valori*, Turin, 2015; H. BIELEFELDT, N. GHANEA, M. WIENER (eds.), *Freedom of Religion or Belief: An International Law Commentary*, Oxford, 2016; M.I. PAPA, G. PASCALE, M. GERVASI (eds.), *La tutela internazionale della libertà religiosa: problemi e prospettive*, Naples, 2019; A. SANTINI, M. SPATTI (eds.), *La libertà di religione in un contesto pluriculturale. Studi di diritto internazionale e dell'Unione europea*, Vatican City, 2021.

The comparison between these provisions contribute to feed the still ongoing debate regarding universalism versus cultural relativism in international human rights law.[3] Whereas the former is inspired by universalism and draws from Art. 18 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the latter are informed by cultural relativism. Of course, the mainstream opinion is that cultural relativism may ultimately encroach upon freedom of religion. Indeed, Art. 18 of the International Covenant proclaims freedom of religion in comprehensive, general, and universal terms. Meanwhile, Art. 8 of the African Charter and Art. 30 of the Arab Charter take into account the cultural, social, and traditional peculiarities of their respective regions,

[3] The current dispute between universalism and cultural relativism in the international protection of human rights constitutes a development of the earlier debate between universalism and regionalism starting around the 1960s. For Western scholars, supporters of universalism, human rights are inherent to the dignity of the human beings as such, whatever culture they belong to; human rights must be respected everywhere and identically, without taking into account any cultural diversity; certain local practices, which are difficult to be tolerated, must not be allowed. For Marxist and TWAIL scholars, supporters of regionalism, the disappearance of different regional cultures and traditions must be avoided since the definition of human rights also depends on them; different regional cultures and traditions facilitate the implementation of international human rights law into domestic legal systems; different regional cultures and traditions could help to prevent human rights from becoming a tool of Western economic neo-colonialism. Even if the opposition between universalism and regionalism rested essentially on political grounds, it nevertheless had legal repercussions, as underlined for instance by the division into two main categories of human rights treaties. Some treaties qualify as universal. They are negotiated under the auspices of international organizations with a universal vocation (first of all the UN); their aim is to be ratified by all States; they contain human rights whose scope is proposed to be universal. Other treaties qualify as regional. They are concluded within regional organizations; they address only States belonging to a certain world region; they proclaim human rights according to the widespread sensitivities among the States of a certain world region, whose cultural specificities tend to be respected. The debate between universalism and regionalism seemed to have come to a conclusion with the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Program of Action, where it was stipulated that human rights are in principle universal but that, at the same time, they cannot be applied, enunciated or interpreted in such a way as to harm regional and local cultures, traditions and diversities. Indeed, in a context of increasing globalization, even if the political background of the discourse appears to have been downgraded, scholars still wonder about the relationship between universalism and regionalism in international human rights law. The main difference from the previous debate is that now the second term of comparison is cultural relativism, which has inherited and partly reshaped the ideas that in the past belonged to regionalism and fosters a sort of "culturalization" of international human rights law. All in all, at the current state of affairs it seems that there is a generalized preference for cultural relativism rather than universalism in international human rights law. According to F. LENZERINI, *The Culturalization of Human Rights Law*, Oxford, 2014, p. 246: "the *effective* universality of human rights is today a limited reality, most human rights norms being *culturally adjustable* in light of the different needs of the diverse human communities" (emphasis in the original). Similarly, according to Art. 1 of the 2001 UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity, "cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature". Furthermore, Art. 4 states that "human rights are guarantees of cultural diversity". In any case, one should pay attention in assessing cultural relativism as the best choice. If one were to appeal completely to cultural relativism, one would end up pandering to a potentially endless fragmentation of international human rights law. Moreover, if carried to its extreme consequences, rather than encouraging the protection of human rights, cultural relativism could facilitate their violation, justifying in its name certain local practices objectively disrespectful of human rights (it is sufficient to recall the well-known case of female genital mutilation).

integrating the right to freedom of religion with more permissive limitation or clawback clauses than that contained in Art. 18(3) of the International Covenant.[4]

Nevertheless, even if one assumes that Art. 8 of the African Charter and Art. 30 of the Arab Charter provide for a weaker protection of freedom of religion than that granted according to Art. 18 of the International Covenant, States Parties to both the former and the latter are not allowed under the law of treaties to derogate from the International Covenant just because of their participation in those regional treaties.[5]

Moreover, it should be noted that the International Covenant is often the only human rights treaty relevant for freedom of religion in States not bound by regional human rights treaties. For example, there is no regional human rights treaty applicable to Asia as a whole, since the Arab Charter is only binding on some Arab States in the Middle East and Northern Africa.[6]

3. The Legal Relationship between Religion and Asylum

As mentioned above, religion can be a cause of persecution when migrants are forced to leave their countries of origin. Consequently, religious migrants are often granted refugee status in countries of destination. Against this background, the legal relationship between religion and asylum is crystal-clear. It is therefore no coincidence that religion has been included in the 1951 Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees as a ground for acceding to the refugee status (the so-called "nexus clause").[7]

From this perspective, the relevant State practice (domestic administrative decisions and related case law), also in connection with international case law and the UNHCR interpretative activity, is essential to understand how to better determine whether a certain phenomenon falls within the scope of religion or not, drawing a line beyond which the Geneva Convention cannot offer any protection.[8]

State practice is also of fundamental importance in order to examine the criteria of assessment of the credibility of applicants, especially in the hypothesis of the so-called

[4] With regard to limitation or clawback clauses in the African Charter, see G. PASCALE, *La tutela internazionale dei diritti dell'uomo nel continente africano*, Naples, 2017, pp. 125-131.

[5] For a more comprehensive analysis, see M. GERVASI, *La libertà religiosa nelle regioni africana e asiatica tra universalismo e relativismo culturale*, in M.I. PAPA, G. PASCALE, M. GERVASI (eds.), *La tutela internazionale*, cit., p. 69 ff.

[6] See K.D. MAGLIVERAS, *The Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in the League of Arab States and in the Arab-Islamic World: An Overview*, in *Diritti umani e diritto internazionale*, 2018, p. 105 ff.

[7] See K. MUSALO, *Claims for Protection Based on Religion or Belief*, in *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 2004, p. 165 ff.

[8] See, for instance, with regard to the US practice, M.J. CHURGIN, *Is Religion Different? Is There a Thumb on the Scale in Refugee Convention Appellate Court Adjudication in the United States? Some Preliminary Thoughts*, in *Texas International Law Journal*, 2016, p. 213 ff. Very recently, as far as Norwegian and Canadian practice is concerned, see H. ÅRSHEIM, *Finding Religion: Assessing Religion-Based Asylum Claims in Refugee Status Determination Procedures in Norway and Canada*, in *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 2025, p. 60 ff.

refugees *sur place*[9] and particularly, within this category, of those who have, by their own conduct, given rise to a well-founded fear of persecution (so-called bootstrap refugees).[10] In these cases, credibility seems to largely hinge on the applicants' conduct and their knowledge of the religion they claim to adhere to.[11] By and large, when an application is associated with religious persecution, especially in cases where the initial reason for leaving a country is outside the framework of the Geneva Convention, the credibility of the applicant's story is crucial.[12]

4. The Social Integration of Religious Migrants in the Countries of Destination, with a Special Focus on European Countries

Religion-based problems may affect migrants once they arrive in their countries of destination. In our increasingly multicultural societies, the complex balance between migration, religion, non-discrimination, and integration is a constant matter of debate.[13] This is particularly true of European societies, which are currently experiencing migratory flows that are perceived as significant by a large part of the public opinion.[14] In addition, unexpected emergencies – such as the outbreak of the Covid-19 and the subsequent refusal of some migrants to be vaccinated for religious reasons – have brought new aspects of this complex balance to the fore in Europe.

A typical aspect of the balance between migration, religion, non-discrimination, and integration within European host societies is its connection to violent extremism and terrorism. Both assumedly depend on religious radicalisation. First, the policies

[9] Refugees *sur place* are not eligible as refugees when they leave their country. They may later become refugees due to events that happen after their departure. This could be due to changes in their home country's political situation, or actions taken by themselves in their host country that lead to a well-founded fear of persecution upon return. See UNHCR, *Handbook and Guidelines on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status under the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, December 2011, HCR/1P/4/ENG/REV.3, para. 94.

[10] As briefly mentioned in the text, the term "bootstrap refugees" refers to individuals who have intentionally created or worsened their situation in their home country to strengthen their claim for asylum in another country. This is also known as "bootstrapping" an asylum claim. The concept is controversial, as it raises questions about the legitimacy of asylum claims and the potential for abuse of the system. In literature, see P. MATHEW, *Limiting Good Faith: "Bootstrapping" Asylum Seekers and Exclusion from Refugee Protection*, in *Australian Yearbook of International Law*, 2010, p. 135 ff.

[11] See T.N. SAMAHON, *The Religion Clauses and Political Asylum: Religious Persecution Claims and the Religious Membership-Conversion Imposter Problem*, in *Georgetown Law Journal*, 2000, p. 2331 ff., and U. BERLIT, H. DOERIG, H. STOREY, *Credibility Assessment in Claims Based on Persecution for Reasons of Religious Conversion and Homosexuality: A Practitioners Approach*, in *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 2015, p. 649 ff.

[12] See, T. EL HAJ, *Credibility Assessment of Religion-based Asylum Claims from a Comparative Perspective*, in this Focus.

[13] See extensively L. ZANFRINI (ed.), *Migrants and Religion: Paths, Issues, and Lenses. A Multidisciplinary and Multi-Sited Study on the Role of Religious Belongings in Migratory and Integration Processes*, Leiden/Boston, 2020.

[14] See E. OLIVITO, *Migration and Religious Freedom in Europe: Searching for Constitutional Secularism*, in this Focus.

that European governments apply to manage the situation of migrants who follow non-majority religions influence religious radicalisation. This may occur when religious profiling is implemented in law enforcement, whether in traditional activities, such as identity checks, or when artificial intelligence systems are involved.[15] Second, religious radicalisation is usually the result of social discrimination experienced by migrants because of their religion. This seems particularly true when Islam is the religion at stake and European societies should deal with freedom of religion of Muslim migrants.[16] It could be argued that inter alia religious profiling policies in law enforcement and religiously motivated social discrimination together generate a lack of integration, which lies at the root of religious radicalisation.

In brief, the questions that need to be asked are to what extent migrants are guaranteed freedom of religion in their European countries of destination and to what extent they can be integrated into their European host societies without any (religious) discrimination, even in order to avoid any form of religious radicalisation. In this regard, international law can and shall have a say.

If one looks at the European countries – in addition to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,[17] which is binding on almost all European countries – the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the EU Charter for Fundamental Freedoms – as interpreted in the case law of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) and the EU Court of Justice (EUCJ) respectively – come especially into account. However, in an attempt to strike a balance between state sovereignty to regulate religious matters in light of their specific socio-cultural traditions and individual rights in terms of freedom of religion and protection against discrimination, these European frameworks still seem to be experiencing difficulties in providing solutions that carefully focus on the migratory background of the people concerned.[18] These difficulties become even more apparent when the ECtHR and the EUCJ address issues concerning freedom of religion of migrant women, particularly in cases where religion plays a role in determining the personal status of women.[19] This occurs despite

[15] See C. DANISI, *The Problem of (Racialized) Religious Profiling and Law Enforcement Operations on the Ground and With AI: What Obligations for European States?*, in this Focus.
[16] See F.R. PARTIPILO, *On Islamophobia and the Religious Rights of Muslims in Europe*, in this Focus.
[17] Particular attention should also be given to the practice of the Human Rights Committee, which operates under the auspices of the UN as the monitoring body of the International Covenant. In the UN framework, the practice of the Human Rights Council and the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief is noteworthy as well. See M.I. PAPA, *The Protection of Migrants' Freedom of Religion in the United Nations System*, in this Focus.
[18] With regard to some of the aforementioned difficulties encountered in both the EU and the ECHR frameworks, see G. CILIBERTO, *Migrants' Freedom of Religion under the European Convention on Human Rights: The Case of the Disposal of Religious Symbols*, in *Italian Review of International and Comparative Law*, 2024, p. 151 ff., and A. RASI, *On the Protection of the Right to Freedom of Religion in the Recent Case Law of the Court of Justice of the European Union*, in *Italian Review of International and Comparative Law*, 2024, p. 173 ff. These two essays were published as part of the output from the first conference organised at La Sapienza University of Rome under the auspices of MiReIL (further information about MiReIL can be found in the final paragraph of this introduction).
[19] See S. TONOLO, *Religion, Gender, and Migrations in Europe through the Lens of Private International Law*, in this Focus.

both the ECtHR and the EUCJ converge in making recourse to human dignity as the main tool in their attempts to balance state sovereignty with the human rights of migrants,[20] including their freedom of religion.

As highlighted, the difficulties dealt with by the two European Courts mainly stem from the strenuous defence by many European States of their socio-cultural traditions. It is seemingly for this reason that in Italy migrants, including asylum seekers, often face restrictions on their freedom of religion upon arrival, in reception or detention centres,[21] as well as after their arrival, when acting in public spaces such as schools,[22] or healthcare facilities.[23] It can be assumed that such restrictions are sometimes designed also in order to impact the effective socio-cultural participation of migrants in host societies. The foregoing can be a key to understand the motivation that has recently prompted Italy, together with Denmark, to lead the protest by a group of nine States against the ECtHR because of its interpretation of the ECHR, which in their view is too evolutionary and favourable to the human rights of migrants (defined as "wrong people" who do not deserve protection since they are apt to commit crimes).[24]

In light of these observations, the two initial questions could now be reformulated into a single one, namely to what extent European States are willing to reshape their public space in order to integrate migrants – above all those with a non-Christian religious background – while ensuring the basic conditions of the *vivre ensemble*.

5. Non-native Religious Minorities and the Search for International Norms concerning their Protection

As mentioned in the first section, in the modern age (1648-1815) and in the first half of the contemporary age (1815-1945) religious minorities were often persecuted. In order to maintain peace and foster trade, many treaty norms dealing with the protection of the main religious minorities – minorities that in any case professed

[20] See A. DI STASI, *Human Dignity as the Basis and Source of Respect for the Rights and Freedoms of Migrants: Some Elements of Convergence in the Case Law of the European Courts (ECTHR and ECJ)*, in A. DI STASI, I. CARACCIOLO, G. CELLAMARE, P. GARGIULO (eds.), *International Migration and the Law. Legal Approaches to a Global Challenge*, London/New York/Turin, 2024, p. 229 ff.

[21] With regard to the implementation of freedom of religion of migrants who are in Italian reception or detention centres, see D. LOPRIENO, *The Religious Freedom of the Received and/or Detained Foreigner as a Paradigm of the Different Violability of Inviolable Freedoms*, in *Italian Review of International and Comparative Law*, 2024, p. 123 ff. This essay as well is an output of the conference previously mentioned in footnote 18.

[22] See F. ANGELINI, *Multiculturalism, Religious Freedom, and School*, in this Focus.

[23] See D. MONEGO, *Religious Migration, Health, and Healthcare Organization*, in this Focus.

[24] The protest began on 22 May 2025 when nine European States signed an open letter calling for a revision of the ECtHR's interpretation of the ECHR with regard to migration issues. This open letter can be read on the official website of the Italian Government, at the following webpage: www.governo.it/sites/governo.it/files/Lettera_aperta_22052025.pdf. For a knee-jerk comment, in addition to the many blogposts that have been published online so far, see L. ACCONCIAMESSA, *L'interpretazione della CEDU, tra universalismo, volontà degli Stati parte e indipendenza della Corte di Strasburgo: la "lettera aperta" del 22 maggio 2025*, in *Osservatorio sulle fonti*, 2025, p. 245 ff.

Christian faiths[25] – soon appeared. In light of the copious amount of such treaty norms, and pursuant to the theory considering treaties as bases contributing to the creation of international customs,[26] one could even wonder whether a customary norm generally safeguarding religious minorities existed too. In any case, at a later time, during the Cold War, international law seemed not interested anymore in religious minorities.[27]

Today, as in the past, many minority groups are again oppressed only or above all because of their religion: *e.g.*, Rohingya in Myanmar; Yazidi in ISIL occupied territories; Christians in African States where Islam is the main religion or vice versa; Shiites in Sunni States or vice versa; Old Believers in Russia; etc. It is clear that religion continues to be a crucial persecution element for minorities in their home countries. Religious persecutions usually force these minorities to massively move abroad. In their countries of destination as well religion is still a crucial identification element for non-native minorities made up of migrants. Therefore, the protection of religious minorities is a problem even in the present day.[28] Finding and assessing the international norms concerning the protection of religious minorities in the current globalised world seems a matter of primary importance that international law can and shall deal with.

In this context, the relevant state practice, when considered alongside the migration episodes that have occurred in recent decades, probably helps to demonstrate a tendency to equalise nowadays non-native minorities to historical minorities. This seems to be a key premise when searching for international norms protecting religious minorities.[29]

6. The Need to Address the Intertwinement between Migration, Religion, and International Law according to an Intersectional and Multidisciplinary Approach

It should be now clear why the many issues stemming from the intertwinement between migration and religion can and shall primarily be framed in an international law perspective. However, international law scholars have generally focused on either

[25] Indeed, in modern times, the international community was notoriously composed only of European States, within which there were almost exclusively religious minorities of a common Christian origin.

[26] It should be noted that the above theory is widely debated in doctrine, clashing with the opposing theory that qualifies treaties as "exceptions" to customary international law. Many studies illustrate the arguments underlying one or the other theory. Be that as it may, the role that treaties play in identifying customs has been recently confirmed by the UN International Law Commission: see M. WOOD, *Draft Conclusions on Identification of Customary International Law*, in *Yearbook of the International Law Commission*, 2018, vol. II, part 2, p. 89 ff., conclusions 6, 10, and 11.

[27] For a historical reconstruction of the treaty norms aimed at protecting religious minorities in the past and for the idea of the existence of a customary international norm in this field, see G. PASCALE, *L'evoluzione storica della tutela internazionale delle minoranze religiose*, in M.I. PAPA, G. PASCALE, M. GERVASI (eds.), *La tutela internazionale*, cit., pp. 349-367.

[28] See extensively D. FERRARI, *Le minoranze religiose tra passato e futuro*, Turin, 2016.

[29] See S. VENIER, *Non-native Religious Minorities in Europe and the Right to Preserve their Faith*, in this Focus.

migrations or freedom of religion so far. While questions concerning the migration phenomenon itself do not appear to have been overlooked in scholarship, freedom of religion (in terms of both *forum internum* and *forum externum*) has mainly been examined in relation to the relevant international human rights norms as enshrined in the UN human rights system (Art. 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights), as well as in the four regional human rights systems (Art. 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights; Art. 12 of the American Convention on Human Rights; Art. 8 of the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights; and Art. 30 of the Arab Charter of Human Rights).

In brief, intersectionality as a research method has almost never been implemented in the international law studies concerning migration on religious bases.[30]

Moreover, these studies have not typically considered the contributions that other disciplines could make to international law-based solutions. A new approach was therefore needed, one that could explore the various dimensions of the complex intertwinement between migration and religion while simultaneously engaging with selected disciplinary approaches in addition to the international law approach. As a way of illustration, from a refugee law perspective, the importance of examining the relationship between migration and religion in depth according to international law is immediately apparent. Nevertheless, a multidisciplinary legal approach could also be helpful, especially when it comes to clarifying the issue of religious persecution.[31] This multidisciplinary approach should sometimes go even beyond the legal field. For instance, the impact of migration from the Global South on social capital and economic growth in the Global North is known; what is less known is that this impact can vary depending on the religion that migrants follow.[32] In any case, this multidisciplinary approach has been generally neglected or not yet widely developed in scientific literature.

7. The MiReIL Research Project

All of the above considerations highlight the necessity and importance of the MiReIL research project, which was funded by the Italian Ministry of University and Research as part of the PRIN 2022 programme. The MiReIL research project has involved scholars coming from four Italian universities with long-standing relationships: Luciano Mauro, Davide Monego, Giuseppe Pascale (Head of the Trieste

[30] About intersectionality as a research method in international law, see A.N. DAVIS, *Intersectionality and International Law: Recognizing Complex Identities on the Global Stage*, in *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, 2015, p. 205 ff.

[31] The main and almost only contribution applying a multidisciplinary approach in the analysis of international refugee law with regard to religion as a ground to claim protection still remain that by MUSALO, *Claims for Protection*, cit., p. 165 ff. Less systemic contributions have been proposed more recently, too often restricted to the issue of credibility assessment in religion-based refugee claims.

[32] See L. MAURO, *Migrants' Religious Beliefs, Social Capital, and Economic Performance*, in this Focus.

Unit and Principal Investigator), Domenico Pauciulo, Sara Tonolo, and Silvia Venier from the University of Trieste; Filippo Andreatta, Marco Balboni, Carmelo Danisi (Head of the Bologna Unit and Deputy Principal Investigator), Francesca Romana Partipilo, and Alessandra Zanobetti from the Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna; Francesca Angelini, Lucia Graziano, Giorgia Marini, Elisa Olivito, and Maria Irene Papa (Head of La Sapienza Unit) from La Sapienza University of Rome; and Claudia Candelmo, Francesco Cherubini (Head of the LUISS Unit), and Tarak El Haj from the LUISS of Rome.[33]

This special issue of *Freedom, Security & Justice* brings together contributions from most of the just mentioned scholars involved in the MiReIL research project. It marks the culmination of the MiReIL research project, which officially began on 30 September 2023 and is due to end on 30 November 2025, after a two-month extension.

As the name of the project suggests (MiReIL is an acronym standing for *Migration and Religion in International Law*), its ultimate goal has been to investigate the intertwinement between migration and religion, primarily from the perspective of the international legal system. However, as the subtitle indicates (*Research-based Proposals for Inclusive, Resilient, and Multicultural Societies*), the project has not been exclusively theoretical, but has also aimed at recommending innovative solutions for social problems. This additional objective has contributed to give MiReIL its multidisciplinary nature. As a result, in this special issue, alongside international law, the intertwinement between migration and religion is also explored from the perspectives of EU law, constitutional law and administrative law, with forays into the field of growth economics. Indeed, by combining the viewpoints of international law with that of other disciplines, this special issue attempts to improve our understanding of the underlying dynamics of the said intertwinement and to suggest concrete ways of addressing daily social problems.

As previously underlined, given the complexity of the intertwinement between religion and migration, intersectionality has been adopted as a unifying methodology for this multidisciplinary research project and for this special issue as well. As a methodological framework, intersectionality has mainly been able to reveal the different concrete effects that applicable norms may have on migrants professing non-majoritarian religions in host societies.

Just one final word regarding terminology: unless otherwise specified, authors in this special issue refer to “migrants” in a general sense, thereby including regular migrants, irregular or undocumented migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, stateless persons.

[33] See the official website of the MiReIL research project at https://sites.google.com/uniroma1.it/prin-2022-mireil. The website is managed by Prof. Giorgia Marini as a member of the MiReIL team.