Jonathan's recent post about the intersection of religion and environmentalism failed to foreshadow the most important way in which religion may have impacted environmental policymaking this week: by scuttling key climate talks associated with the G8 meeting in Italy. As reported here, the meeting succeeded in securing a pledge from G8 nations to reduce their GHG emissions by 80% by 2050 (this was the first time the U.S. had made this commitment on an international stage) and to seek to limit warming to 2 degrees C. But many had hoped that meetings between President Obama and China's Hu Jintao would provide a breakthrough on the countries' climate negotiating positions, too. That was not to be. Here's the Wall St Journal account (subscription req'd):

> Chinese President Hu Jintao's sudden departure from the meeting early Wednesday further complicates negotiations, dealing a potentially significant blow to the summit's ability to produce concrete results on issues from climate change to economic recovery. . . . Mr. Hu departed to deal with rioting in China's western Xinjiang territory before he could meet privately with U.S. President Barack Obama or attend critical meetings of the G-8 plus 5, which includes China and four other developing economies.
>
> Mr. Hu also was scheduled to attend the larger 17-nation Major Economies Forum on Thursday, chaired by Mr. Obama, and charged with reaching an accord on climate-change issues. Mr. Obama had hoped for a breakthrough in his debut on the stage of the international climate debate, but Mr. Hu's absence makes a last-minute push by Mr. Obama for a broad accord on emissions reductions impossible, U.S. officials here say.

The rioting drawing Mr. Hu home is an eruption of an ongoing ethnic and religious conflict between China's Islamic Uighur minority and its Han majority. (Here's the AP story giving more detail.) Many predict that climate change pressures will make ethnic and religious tensions more fierce by enhancing struggles for natural resources; it appears that those tensions will also hinder cooperative solutions to the climate change problem.