

# Routledge Handbook of Religion and Politics

*Edited by*  
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# Introduction

*Jeffrey Haynes*

Prior to the eighteenth century and the subsequent formation and development of the modern (secular) international state system, religion was a key ideology that often stimulated political conflict between societal groups. However, following the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 and the subsequent development of centralised states first in Western Europe and then via European colonisation to most of the rest of the world, both domestically and internationally, the political importance of religion significantly declined.

In the early twenty-first century, however, there is a resurgence of – often politicised forms of – religion. This trend has been especially noticeable in the post-cold war era (that is, since the late 1980s), notably among the so-called ‘world religions’ (Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism). Regarding important events in this context, many observers point to the Iranian revolution of 1978–9 – as it marked the ‘reappearance’ of religion (in this case, Shii Islam) as a significant political actor in Iran, a country that like Turkey, with its Sunni Muslim majority, decades before had adopted a Western-derived, secular development model.

Since the late 1970s, numerous other examples of the growing political influence of religion have been noted – with the partial exception of Europe, especially

its western segment. Europe is widely seen as an exception, because most regional countries are now very secular, with religion squeezed from public life. Among ‘developed’ countries and regions, however, Europe’s position contrasts with that of the USA. More than half of all Americans claim regularly to attend religious services, three or four times the European norm. In addition, eight words – ‘In God We Trust’ and the ‘United States of America’ – appear on all US currency, both coins and notes. The continuing popular significance of religion in the USA is to some degree a cultural issue, deriving in part from the worldview of the original European settlers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, many of whom shared an Anglo-Protestant culture. This has stayed an important cultural factor until the present time.

Elsewhere in the world, since the late 1970s we have seen increased political involvement of religious actors within many countries, as well as internationally. Much attention is often focused upon so-called ‘Islamic fundamentalism’, particularly in the Middle East, to the extent that a casual observer might assume that the entire region is polarised religiously and politically between Jews and Muslims. This is partly because both groups claim ‘ownership’ of various holy places, including Jerusalem, while conflict between them

is also a result of the plight of the continuing conflict between Israel and the (mostly Muslim) Palestinians. There are also other political issues in the region – notably the large number of non-democratic governments – that have also encouraged widespread political involvement of various Islamist actors.<sup>1</sup> In addition, Islamists are also active in, *inter alia*, Africa, Central Asia, and South East and East Asia.

However, it is not only Islamists who pursue political goals related to religion. In officially secular India, there have been significant recent examples of militant Hinduism; many stemmed from, but were not confined to, the Babri Masjid mosque incident at Ayodhya in 1992. This event was instrumental in transforming the country's political landscape, to the extent that a 'Hindu fundamentalist' political party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), swiftly grew to political prominence. From the mid-1990s, the BJP served in several coalition governments and until May 2004 – when the BJP lost power to a resurgent Congress Party – it was the leading party in government.<sup>2</sup> In addition, Jewish religious parties currently serve in the Olmert government in Israel, while the Roman Catholic Church was a leading player in the recent turn to democracy in, among others, Poland, South Africa and several Latin American countries. In sum, there are numerous examples of recent religious involvement in politics in various parts of the world, in both domestic and international contexts.

Debates about the current political importance of religion also include a focus upon various issues that can be grouped together under the rubric: 'Religion, Security and Development'. What unites them is a common concern with the impact of religion on conflict and development issues and outcomes. Among them can be noted Samuel Huntington's controversial thesis about 'clashing civilisations', with religion and culture key

factors, while others stress the potential of religion to help resolve political conflicts and be a major component of peacebuilding. Scholars also focus upon the influence of religion on various manifestations of terrorism and, more generally, the post-9/11 'War on Terror' (now known as 'The Long War'), as well as the significance of religion in relation to the developmental position of females. Finally, a new religion-linked controversy has emerged: a debate between 'religion and science' on the relative scientific merits of Darwin's Theory of Evolution and 'Intelligent Design'.

In sum, a variety of religious actors and factors are now involved in various political issues and controversies. For many observers, this 'return' of religion is both novel and unexpected: until recently, it appeared that religious actors could safely be ignored in both politics and international relations because they appeared to be collectively insignificant. Now, however, governments, analysts and observers would all agree that things have changed in various ways. This book examines the recent 'return' of religion to politics and international relations.

The book approaches this issue as follows. The first part of the book comprises eight essays under the collective heading: 'The World Religions and Politics'. The following religions are examined: Buddhism, Christianity: Protestantism, Christianity: Catholicism and the Catholic Church, Confucianism, Hinduism, Sunni Islam, Shia Islam, and Judaism. The overall aim is to illustrate the contention that in recent years, around the world, each of these religious traditions has engaged for a variety of reasons with a variety of political issues and controversies.

In the second part of the book, the focus turns to the relationship between 'religion and governance'. The seven essays that comprise this section are on the following topics: secularisation and politics,

religious fundamentalisms, religion and the state, religion and democracy, religion and political parties, religion and civil society, and religious commitment and socio-political orientations.

The third part is concerned with 'religion and international relations', and comprises four essays; religion and international relations theory, religion and foreign policy, religious transnational actors and politics, and religion and globalisation.

The final part of the book is made up of five chapters on the overall theme of 'religion, security and development' and includes the following topics: terrorism, conflict prevention and peacebuilding, religion and gender, faith-based development aid, and religion, climate change and human suffering.

In short, the overall rationale for the project is to provide a definitive survey of what is currently happening in relation to the interaction of religion and politics, both domestically and internationally, with regard to a variety of issues.

Examining a more general and complex relationship between religion and politics in the contemporary world, the book discovers that, apparently irrespective of which religious tradition we are concerned with, many religious ideas, experiences and practices are all significantly affected by the impact of globalisation on both politics and international relations. The impact of globalisation is encouraging many religions to adopt new or renewed agendas in relation to a variety of religious, social, political and economic concerns. It is also stimulating many religious individuals, organisations and movements to look not only at local and national issues and contexts but also to focus on regional and international environments. We will see that in many cases such concerns are focused in two generic areas: *social development and human rights*; and *conflict and conflict resolution*.

## Social development and human rights

Most analyses of religion and politics focus on economic, social and/or cultural issues, including the economic range and social and cultural significance of the activities of transnational corporations (TNCs). This often leads to the perception that TNCs are taking economic power both from governments and citizens. This comes in the context of what is often understood as significant downsides to economic globalisation: the apparent mass impoverishment of already poor people, especially in the developing world. These circumstances have led to a new focus for numerous religious organisations, concerned with trying to redress these imbalances, reflecting more generally a concern with multiple – social, economic and human rights – concerns. This focus is manifested in various ways, including: new religious fundamentalisms, support for anti-globalisation activities, such as anti-World Trade Organisation protests, and North/South economic justice efforts. In sum, recent religious responses to globalisation have often included a stress on social interests, manifested in various ways, which together go way beyond the confines of what might be called 'church' or more generally 'religious' life.

These concerns are now increasingly pursued within inter-faith contexts. In recent years, various inter-faith religious forums have sought to bring sustained concern to social development issues – and by extension – human rights issues through an inter-faith focus. For example, there is the well known World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD), an initiative that, encouraged by the World Bank, sought to map areas of convergence among various separate religious faiths' development agendas. Many shared a focus on relationships of service and solidarity, harmony with the earth, and the vital but – necessarily limited – contribution of

material progress to human development and satisfaction.

A senior World Bank figure, Katherine Marshall, delivered a speech in April 2005 that seemed to be especially significant in emphasising that the World Bank no longer believed ‘that religion and socio-economic development belong to different spheres and are best cast in separate roles – even separate dramas’. This observation was based on a recognition that around the world both religious organisations and (secular) development agencies often share similar concerns: how to improve (1) the lot of materially poor people, (2) the societal position of those suffering from social exclusion, and (3) unfulfilled human potential in the context of glaring developmental polarisation within and between countries, which the World Bank now accepts, has arisen in part because of the polarising impact of globalisation (Marshall 2005). Marshall’s speech also emphasised that while in the past religion was understood by the World Bank to be primarily concerned with ‘otherworldly’ and ‘world-denying’ issues, it now accepted that religion can play a significant role in seeking to achieve developmental goals for millions of people, especially in the developing world. The Bank also now recognises that issues of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’, as well as those linked to social and economic justice, are central to the teachings of *all* the world religions (that is, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism). This realisation is influential in highlighting: (1) how relatively marginal most current manifestations of religious fundamentalism are, yet (2) at the same time, potentially increasingly the likelihood that disadvantaged people might turn to various religious fundamentalisms compared to people who are happy and confident in their developmental positions.

Reflecting such concerns, recent years have seen regular ‘Leaders’ Meetings’, convened to enable religious leaders to try to address these issues. One such meeting was

held in Canterbury, England, in October 2002, hosted by James Wolfensohn, then president of the World Bank, and Dr George Carey, at the time head of the worldwide Anglican communion of around 70 million people. The main purpose of the meeting was to bring together an important group of leaders ‘from the world’s faith communities, key development organisations, and from the worlds of entertainment, philanthropy and the private sector’. Linked to the Millennium Development Goals announced in 2000, with the aim of achieving them by 2015, key themes addressed at the meeting included: poverty, HIV/AIDS, gender, conflict and social justice. Participants accepted that poverty, HIV/AIDS, conflict, gender concerns, international trade and global politics explicitly link all the world’s countries and peoples – rich and poor – into a global community. Another main theme was the dualistic impact of globalisation, with its differential impact on rich and poor countries. The meeting revealed a growing sense of religious solidarity that highlights the urgency of developing shared responsibility and partnership to deal with collective problems facing humanity. Yet it is crucial to move from talk to action: as much more needs to be done to progress from expressions of shared religious solidarity in response to shared development problems to a realisation of practical plans involving collaboration between the worlds of faith and development in confronting major development issues (Marshall and March 2003).

## Conflict and conflict resolution

The second issue that informs many of the chapters of this book is also linked to the impact of globalisation: religion’s involvement in both conflict and conflict resolution in various parts of the world. A starting point for our analysis in this



regard was to note that globalisation both highlights and encourages religious pluralism. But religious responses may well be different. This is because some religions, including Judaism, Christianity and Islam (sometimes known as the ‘religions of the book’, because in each case their authority emanates principally from sacred texts, actually, similar texts) claim what Kurtz calls ‘exclusive accounts of the nature of reality’, that is, only *their* religious beliefs are judged to be *true* by adherents (Kurtz 1995: 238).

As globalisation results in increased interaction between people and communities, the implication is that not only are encounters between different religious traditions likely to be increasingly common but also that there will be various outcomes as a result: some will be harmonious, others will not. Sometimes, the result is what Kurtz has called ‘culture wars’ (Kurtz 1995: 168). These can occur because various religious worldviews encourage different allegiances and standards in relation to various areas, including the family, law, education and politics. As a result, conflicts between people, ethnic groups, classes and nations can be framed in religious terms. Such religious conflicts seem often to ‘take on “larger-than-life” proportions as the struggle of good against evil’ (Kurtz 1995: 170). This may be noted in relation to certain religious minorities who may regard their own existential position – for example, Muslim minority communities in Thailand, the United Kingdom, France, the Philippines and India – to be unacceptably weakened because of actual or perceived pressure from majority religious communities – Buddhists in Thailand, Christians in Britain, France and the Philippines, and Hindus in India – to conform to the norms and values of the religious and cultural majority.

There are many examples of religious involvement in recent and current national and international conflicts. For example,

stability and prosperity in the Middle East is a pivotal goal, central to achieving general peace and the elimination of poverty in the region. Yet the Middle East is particularly emblematic in relation to religion – in part because the region was the birthplace of the world’s three great monotheistic religions (Christianity, Islam and Judaism). This brings with it a legacy not only of shared wisdom but also of conflict – a complex relationship that has impacted in recent years on countries as far away as Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, the United States and Britain. A key to peace in the region may well be achievement of significant collaborative efforts among different religious bodies, which along with external religious and secular organisations, for example from Europe and the United States, may through collaborative efforts work towards developing a new model of peace and cooperation to enable the Middle East to escape from what many see as an endless cycle of religious-based conflict. Overall, this emphasises that religion may be intimately connected, and not only in the Middle East, *both* to international conflicts and their prolongation *and* to attempts at reconciliation of such conflicts. In other words, in relation to many international conflicts, religion can play a significant, even a fundamental role, contributing to conflicts in various ways, including how they are intensified, channelled or reconciled. In addition, we also saw that religion has a key part to play in resolution of conflicts in other parts of the world, including South Asia (notably India/Pakistan) and Africa (for example, in relation to the recently ended civil war in Sudan). We also noted its involvement in the still simmering civil war in Sri Lanka, between the minority (Hindu) Tamils and the majority (Buddhist) Sinhalese.

In sum, religion is becoming a more important factor in relation to both politics and international relations in many parts of the world; yet, it would be incorrect only

to focus on the links with conflict. To do so, would mean that we would be likely to overlook the many recent and current examples of religious involvement in attempts at conflict resolution. On the other hand, the fact remains that many current international conflicts have religious aspects that can exacerbate both hatred and violence and make the conflicts themselves exceptionally difficult to resolve. Hans Kung, an eminent Roman Catholic theologian, claims that

the most fanatical, the cruelest political struggles are those that have been colored, inspired, and legitimized by religion. To say this is not to reduce all political conflicts to religious ones, but to take seriously the fact that religions share in the responsibility for bringing peace to our torn and warring world.

(Hans Kung, quoted in Smock 2004)

Such concerns are echoed in Samuel Huntington's (1993, 1996) controversial thesis of a 'clash of civilisations', a topic that has filled international debates, especially since 9/11. This thesis was erected upon Huntington's belief that there is a serious 'civilisational' threat to global order that has become especially apparent after the cold war. It is rooted in the idea that there are competing 'civilisations' that engage in conflict that affects outcomes in international relations in various ways. On the one hand, there is the 'West' (especially North America and Western Europe) with values and political cultures deemed to be rooted in liberal democratic and Judaeo-Christian concepts, understood to lead to an emphasis on tolerance, moderation and societal consensus. On the other hand, there is supposedly a bloc of allegedly 'anti-democratic', primarily Muslim, countries, believed to be on a collision course with the West.

A key problem with Huntington's thesis, however, is that there are actually no 'civilisations' that act politically or in international relations in uniform and single-minded ways. Instead, wherever we look – for example, the United States, Europe, Israel, the Muslim countries of the Middle East – what is most notable is the *plurality* of beliefs and norms of behaviour that are apparent even in allegedly cohesive and uniform civilisations. It is useful to bear these concerns in mind when thinking about the role of religion in relation to conflict in both domestic and international contexts. It is important not to overestimate religion's potential for and involvement in large-scale violence and conflict – especially if that implies ignoring or underestimating its involvement and potential as a significant source of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. It is also important to recognise that, especially in recent years, numerous religious individuals, movements and organisations have been actively involved in attempts to end conflicts and to foster post-conflict reconciliation between formerly warring parties (Bouta *et al.* 2005). This emphasises that various religions collectively play a key role in international relations and diplomacy by helping to resolve conflicts and build peace. The 'clash of civilisations' thesis oversimplifies causal interconnections between religion and conflict, in particular by disregarding important alternate variables, including the numerous attempts from a variety of religious traditions to help resolve conflicts and build peace. When successful, religion's role in helping resolve conflicts is a crucial component in wider issues of human development because, as Ellis and ter Haar note: 'Peace is a precondition for human development. Religious ideas of various provenance – indigenous religions as well as world religions – play an important role in *legitimising or discouraging violence*' (my emphasis; Ellis and ter Haar 2004).

Overall, the book's chapters make it clear that religion has now reappeared as an important domestic and international political actor in part because of the impact of deepening globalisation, which has led to an expansion of channels, pressures and agents via which norms are diffused and interact through both transnational and international networks and interactions. As a result, religious actors now pursue a variety of political goals both nationally and internationally that in many cases links their concerns to the economic, social and political consequences of globalisation.

## Notes

- 1 An Islamist is a believer in or follower of Islam, someone who may be willing to use various political means to achieve religiously derived objectives.
- 2 The secular Congress Party emerged as the largest party following the elections of April/May 2004. The breakdown of seats in the 542-seat Lok Sabha was: Congress and allies: 220; BJP and allies: 185; Others: 137.

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## Religious fundamentalisms

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Contemporary manifestations of religious fundamentalism are an aspect of a more general religious resurgence in most but not all parts of the world, with western Europe an exception to the general trend (Hadden 1987; Shupe 1990; Bruce 2003; Norris and Inglehart 2004). It is useful to think of the various manifestations of contemporary religious fundamentalism as a counter-movement often militantly opposed to what followers perceive as the inexorable onwards march of secularisation, leading to political and public marginalisation and privatisation of religion. To many observers and 'ordinary' people, a further defining characteristic of any form of religious fundamentalism is its social and political conservatism. Socially, religious fundamentalism is regarded as backward looking, anti-modern, inherently opposed to change. Note, however, that if this was actually the case it would be very difficult satisfactorily to explain the sometimes *revolutionary political demands and programmes* of some religious fundamentalist thinkers and activists. Some aim, particularly Islamists in the Middle East and elsewhere in the Muslim world, to overthrow regimes that they regard as un- or anti-Islamic and replace them with more authentically Islamic governments. On the other hand, some Christian fundamentalists in the United States – people who believe in the inerrancy of the Bible

and subscribe to a modern form of millenarianism (that is, the teaching in Christianity that Jesus will rule for a thousand years on earth) may seem to fit more closely conventional wisdom. This is because they are often linked to conservative political forces, for example in the USA, whose aim is to seek to undo what they judge to be symptoms of unwelcome liberalisation and the relaxation of traditional social and moral mores characteristic, they believe, of secularisation (*Religion and Ethics News Weekly* 2004).

### Explaining religious fundamentalism

According to Woodhead and Heelas, religious fundamentalism is a 'distinctively modern twentieth-century movement' albeit with 'historical antecedents' (Woodhead and Heelas 2000: 32). Conceptually, the term has been widely employed since the 1970s to describe numerous, apparently diverse, religious and political developments around the globe (Caplan 1987). However, the term was first used a century ago by conservative Christians in the USA to describe themselves: they claimed they wanted to get back to what they saw as the 'fundamentals' of their religion, as depicted in the Bible. Such people typically came from

‘mainline’ – that is, established – Protestant denominations, not usually the Roman Catholic Church. Now, however, the label ‘religious fundamentalism’ has become a generic term, widely applied to a multitude of groups from various religious traditions, comprising people who share a decidedly conservative religious outlook (Simpson 1992).

Generally speaking, both the character and impact of fundamentalist doctrines are located within a nexus of moral and social concerns centring on state–society interactions. In some cases, the initial defensiveness of ‘religious fundamentalists’ came from a belief that they were under attack from modernisation and secularisation and/or the intrusion of alien ethnic, cultural or religious groups. Sometimes this developed into a broad socio-political offensive to try to redress the situation, in particular targeting political rulers and lax co-religionists for their perceived inadequacies and weaknesses. Informing their religious and political outlooks, religious fundamentalists turn to core religious texts – such as the Christian Bible or the Quran – to find out God’s ‘opinion’ on various social and political topics, often through the use of selected readings which may form the basis of programmes of reform (Marty and Appleby 1991).

Contemporary religious fundamentalisms are often said to be rooted in the failed promise of modernity, reactive against perceived unwelcome manifestations of modernisation, especially declining moral values or perceived undermining of the family as a social institution (Haynes 2003). To many religious fundamentalists God was in danger of being superseded by a gospel of technical progress accompanying sweeping socio-economic changes. Around the world, the pace of socio-economic change, especially since World War II, everywhere strongly challenged traditional habits, beliefs and cultures, and societies were under considerable and constant pressure to adapt

to modernisation. Not least, in an increasingly materialist world one’s individual worth was increasingly measured according to secular standards of wealth and status; religion seemed ignored, belittled or threatened. Thus to many religious fundamentalists unwelcome social, cultural and economic changes were the root cause of what they saw as a toxic cocktail of religious, moral and social decline.

### **Religious fundamentalism: definitional issues**

It is time to confront a significant analytical problem. It is sometimes suggested that ‘religious fundamentalism’ is an empty and therefore meaningless term. It is said to be erroneously and casually employed, primarily ‘by western liberals’ in relation ‘to a broad spectrum of religious phenomena which have little in common except for the fact that they are alarming to liberals!’ (Woodhead and Heelas 2000: 32). This view contends that the range of people and groups casually labelled ‘fundamentalist’ is so wide – from the revolutionary political Islamism of the Iranian ideologue, Ali Shariati, the Egyptian Sayyid Qutb, the Pakistani Maulana Maududi, and the Saudi Arabian, Usama bin Laden, through to socially conservative Christians in the USA, such as Pat Robertson and the late Jerry Falwell – that the term lacks clarity, precision and meaning. As a consequence, Hallencreutz and Westerlund aver, the broad use of the term ‘religious fundamentalism’

has become increasingly irrelevant. In sum, viewed as a derogatory concept, tied to Western stereotypes and Christian presuppositions, the casual use of the term easily causes misunderstandings and prevents the understanding of the dynamics

and characteristics of different religious groups with explicit political objectives.

(Hallencreutz and Westerlund 1996: 4)

We shall turn later to the various political objectives of religious fundamentalists. For now, we can note that, despite such criticisms, the term 'religious fundamentalism' is commonly found in both academic and popular discourse. Numerous journal articles and books on the topic have appeared, including important volumes in the 1990s by Marty and Appleby (1991, 1993a, 1993b, 1994, 1995) and Lawrence (1995), which used the term analytically. Thus by no means all analysts and observers reject the use of the term. Those accepting its analytical and explanatory relevance do so because they perceive contemporary religious fundamentalist thinkers and movements around the world – albeit encompassing very different religious traditions – as having some important features in common, including: core beliefs, norms and values. These include:

- a desire to return to the fundamentals of a religious tradition and strip away unnecessary accretions
- an aggressive rejection of western secular modernity
- an oppositional minority group-identity maintained in an exclusivist and militant manner
- attempts to reclaim the public sphere as a space of religious and moral purity
- a patriarchal and hierarchical ordering of relations between the sexes.

(Woodhead and Heelas 2000: 32)

Drawing on data compiled from studies of numerous religious fundamentalist groups from several religious traditions in different parts of the world, Marty and Scott Appleby arrive at the following definition of

religious fundamentalists. They are people who hold a 'set of strategies, by which beleaguered believers attempt to preserve their distinctive identity as a people or group'. They see themselves acting in response to a real or imagined attack from those who, they believe, want to draw them into a 'syncretistic, areligious, or irreligious cultural milieu' (Marty and Scott Appleby 1993a: 3). Following an initial sense of defensiveness as a result of perception of attack from unwelcome, alien forces, fundamentalists may well go on to develop an offensive strategy aimed at altering radically prevailing socio-political realities in order to 'bring back' religious concerns into public centrality.

In sum, it can be stated that religious fundamentalists have the following in common:

- They fear that their preferred religiously orientated way of life is under attack from unwelcome secular influences or alien groups.
- Their aim is to create traditionally orientated, less modern(ised) societies
- As a result, many pursue campaigns in accordance with what they believe are suitable religious tenets in order to change laws, morality, social norms and – in some cases – domestic and/or international political configurations.
- Many are willing to contest politically with ruling regimes in various ways if the latter's jurisdiction appears to be encroaching into areas of life – including education, gender relations and employment policy – that religious fundamentalists believe are integral to their vision of a religiously appropriate society, one characterised by a certain kind of 'pure' moral climate
- They may also actively oppose co-religionists who they believe are excessively lax in upholding their religious duties – as well as followers

of rival or opposing religions who they may regard as misguided, evil, even satanic.

Even those rejecting the general use of the term 'religious fundamentalism' might accept that it has relevance in one specific context: self-designated Christian fundamentalists in the United States. Emerging over a century ago, such people – believing implicitly in the inerrancy of the Bible – sought to resist what they saw as the unacceptable inroads of secular modernity. Until the 1970s, US Christian fundamentalists were often apolitical, even in some cases excluding themselves from the public realm. Over time, however, many began to realise that retreating from the world was actually self-defeating – because as a result they could not hope to alter what they saw as catastrophically unwelcome developments intrinsically linked to modernisation and secularisation. In recent years, Christian fundamentalists in the USA have become increasingly vociferous, an influential political constituency. Leaders of the movement have included the late Jerry Falwell, founding leader of the organisation Moral Majority (formed in 1979, dissolved in 1989), as well as two recent but unsuccessful presidential candidates: Pat Robertson and Pat Buchanan. However, usage of the term has been rather flexible, sometimes used in reference to the broad community of religious – mostly Christian – conservatives and at other times to denote a small subset of institutionalised organisations pursuing explicit goals of cultural and economic conservatism. Many Christian fundamentalists in the USA coalesce in a movement known initially when it was founded in the 1970s as the 'New Christian Right'; now it is referred to as either 'the Christian Right' or 'the Religious Right', with the latter term implying that other religious traditions are also present. In short, the Religious Right is an important

religious/social/political movement in the USA, not exclusive to but generally linking conservative American Christians (Bruce 2003; Dolan 2005).

The use of the Bible by the Christian conservatives in the USA draws attention to the fact that religious fundamentalists generally use holy books as a key source for their ideas. However, drawing on the example of American Christian conservatives, many analysts who employ the term religious fundamentalism suggest that it is only properly applicable to Christianity and the other 'Abrahamic' religions of the 'book': Islam and Judaism. This is because Christian, Islamic and Jewish fundamentalists all take their defining dogma from what they believe to be the inerrancy of God's own words set out in their holy books. In other words, singular scriptural revelations are central to each set of fundamentalist dogma in these three religions.

### **'Islamic fundamentalism'/ Islamism**

Bealey defines religious fundamentalism in terms of a

religious position claiming strict adherence to basic beliefs. This frequently results in intolerance towards other beliefs and believers in one's own creed who do not strictly observe and who do not profess to hold an extreme position. Thus Protestant fundamentalists scorn Protestants who fail to perceive a danger from Catholicism; Jewish fundamentalists attack Jews with secularist leanings; and Muslim fundamentalists believe that they have a duty to purge Islam of any concessions to cultural modernisation. *A political implication is the tendency of fundamentalists to turn to terrorism.*

(my emphasis; Bealey 1999: 140)

While the Muslim world, like the Christian universe, is divided by religious disputes, it is also the case that many Muslims would accept that they are linked by belief, culture, sentiments and identity, collectively focused in the global Muslim community, the *ummah*. It is also the case that there were clear international manifestations of what we might call 'Islamic resurgence', especially after the humbling defeat of the Arabs by Israel in the Six-day War of June 1967 and the Iranian revolution a dozen years later.

Like their Jewish and Christian counterparts, Islamic fundamentalists (or Islamists, the term many analysts prefer), take as their defining dogma what are believed to be God's words written in their holy book, the Quran. In other words, singular scriptural revelations are central to Islamic fundamentalist dogma. We have also noted that a defining character of all religious fundamentalisms is social conservatism. As already noted, however, this does not imply a corresponding political conservatism, characterised by an unwillingness to countenance significant political changes. But what of Bealey's most contentious claim, that religious fundamentalists, including Islamic fundamentalists, are noted for a political 'tendency' to 'turn to terrorism'?

Let's start by noting that Islamist groups work to change the current social and political order by the use of various political means. These include incremental reform of existing political regimes by various means, including, if allowed, taking part in and winning elections through the auspices of a political party, as well as the use of political violence or terrorism *in some circumstances*. But what might these circumstances be? And is this course of action linked to the very nature of their fundamentalist beliefs? As a way of answering these questions, it is useful to refer to some of the ideas expressed by several noteworthy twentieth-century Islamist thinkers: Maulana Maududi, Sayyid Qutb, Ali Shariati and Ayatollah Khomeini.

Born in India, Maulana Maududi (1903–79) was one of the most influential Muslim theologians of the twentieth century. His philosophy, literary productivity and tireless activism contributed immensely to the development of Islamic political and social movements around the world. Maulana Maududi's ideas profoundly influenced Sayyid Qutb of Egypt's *Jamiat al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn* (the Muslim Brotherhood), another leading Muslim philosopher of the twentieth century. Together, Maududi and Qutb are considered the founding fathers of the global Islamist movement. Maududi's ideas about the Islamic state are widely regarded as the basic foundation for the political, economical, social and religious system of any Islamic country that wishes to live under Islamic law (*sharia*). This is an ideological system that, while intentionally discriminating between people according to their religious affiliations, in no way prescribes the acceptability of political violence, much less terrorism.

Sayyid Qutb (1906–66) was an Egyptian, a prominent Islamist and member of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Arab world's oldest Islamist group, which advocates an Islamic state in Egypt. Qutb's political thinking was deeply influenced by the revolutionary radicalism of a contemporaneous Islamist, Maulana Maududi. Qutb's ideological development fell into two distinct periods: before 1954, and following a sojourn in the United States, from 1954 until his execution by the Egyptian government in 1966, after imprisonment and torture by the secularist government of Gamal Abdel Nasser. Following an attempt on Nasser's life in October 1954, the government imprisoned thousands of members of the Muslim Brotherhood, including Qutb, and officially banned the organisation. During his second, more radical, phase, Qutb declared 'Western civilisation' the enemy of Islam; denounced leaders of Muslim nations for not following



Islam closely enough; and sought to spread the belief among Sunni Muslims that it was their duty to undertake *jihad* to defend and purify Islam. Note however that in this conception *jihad* does not necessarily imply anti-western conflict; instead, it refers to an individual Muslim's striving for spiritual self-perfection.

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (1900–89) was Iranian Shi'ite leader and Head of State in Iran from 1979 until his death in 1989. He was arrested (1963) and exiled (1964) for his opposition to Shah Muhammad Reza Pahlavi's regime. He returned to Iran on the Shah's downfall (1979) and established a new constitution that gave him supreme powers. His reign was marked by a return to strict observance of the Islamic code. Iran's revolution was divided into two stages: the first saw an alliance of liberal, leftist and Islamic groups oust the Shah; the second stage, often named the 'Islamic Revolution', saw the ayatollahs come to power. During the second stage Khomeini achieved the status of a revered spiritual leader among many Shi'a Muslims. In Iran he was officially addressed as Imam<sup>1</sup> rather than as Ayatollah. Khomeini was also a highly influential and innovative Islamic political theorist, most noted for his development of the theory, the 'guardianship of the juriconsult'.

The Iranian, Dr Ali Shariati (1933–77), was another influential Islamist. Shariati was a sociologist, well known and respected for his works in the field of the sociology of religion, including *Mission of a Free Thinker* and *Where Shall We Begin?* (<http://www.shariati.com/>). He was strongly influenced by the work of the West Indian author and revolutionary, Franz Fanon (1925–61). Shariati urged Muslims to 'abandon Europe' and 'end the impossible task of acting as intermediaries between them and the forces at work in the colonisation project'. In this respect Shariati's ideas reflect similar concerns in Asia, the Middle East and Africa, that echoes and reflects what

might be called a shared 'Third World consciousness' and a growing resentment at the outcomes of current and historical episodes of western involvement and interaction (Milton-Edwards 2006: 81).

In sum, the various concerns expressed by Maududi, Qutb, Khomeini and Shariati reflect in somewhat different ways a shared focus on Islamist 'growth, exploration and generation of discourse of protest against the West' (Milton-Edwards 2006: 81). What they have in common, in other words, is a shared sense that the West – because of its expansionism and perceived disdain for religion in general and Islam in particular – is a key problem for Muslims around the world.

This concern with inequality and injustice, with its perceived roots in a historical Western hegemony manifested in an earlier period by colonialism and imperialism and now via global capitalist economic control, is said to be a key factor encouraging the growth of Islamism throughout the Muslim world (Akbar 2002). The end of World War I in 1918 coincided both with the demise of the Turkish Ottoman empire and the onset of Arab nationalism. Throughout, the Middle East nations began to demand political freedom from *de facto* British or French colonial rule that, as a result of League of Nations mandates, replaced Ottoman power. The nationalist struggle was also informed by the extent to which emerging, predominantly Muslim, states in the Middle East should seek to employ the tenets of Islamic law (*sharia*) in their legal and political systems. The issue of the Islamicisation of politics in the Middle East had a precedent in some parts of the Muslim world in the form of anti-imperialist and anti-pagan 'holy wars' (*jihads*) which had periodically erupted from the late nineteenth century, especially in parts of West Africa and East Asia (Akbar 2002). These were regions where conflicts between tradition and modernisation, and between Islam and

Christianity, were often especially acute, frequently fuelled by European colonialism and imperialism.

Going further back, to the emergence of Islam fourteen hundred years ago, Muslim religious critics of the status quo have periodically emerged, opposed to what they perceive as unjust, unacceptable forms of rule. Contemporary Islamists can be seen as the most recent examples of this trend. This is because they characterise themselves as the 'just' involved in a *jihad* ('holy war') against the 'unjust', primarily but not exclusively their own domestic political rulers. Sometimes, as with the current Al-Qaeda campaign, a key enemy is located internationally (Haynes 2005a, 2005b). Overall, there is a dichotomy between the 'just' and the 'unjust' in the promotion of social change throughout Islamic history that parallels the tension in the west between 'state' and 'civil society'. In other words, 'just' and 'unjust', like 'state' and 'civil society', are mutually exclusive concepts where a strengthening of one necessarily implies a weakening of the other. The implication is that the 'unjust' inhabit the state while the 'just' look in from the outside, seeking to reform political and social systems and mores that they regard as both corrupt and insufficiently Islamic. Contemporary Islamic fundamentalists regard themselves as the Islamic 'just', striving to achieve their goal of a form of direct democracy under the auspices of God and *sharia* law. In some conceptions of Islamic rule, a religious and political ruler, the *caliph*, would emerge, a figure who would use his wisdom to settle disputes brought to him by his loyal subjects and rule the polity on God's behalf (Fuller 2003: 13–46).

Shared beliefs, relating to culture, sentiments and identity, link Muslims in the global *ummah*. As a result, it is unsurprising that certain international events appear to influence the contemporary Islamic resurgence – of which Islamism is an important

although not the only aspect (Milton-Edwards 2006). Among them, we can note two: the humbling defeat of Arab countries by Israel in the calamitous Six-day War of June 1967 and the Iranian revolution (1979). The sense of inferiority and defeat that the Six-day War engendered was to some extent lightened by the Iranian revolution a dozen years later (Saikal 2003). Since then, a lethal combination of often poor government, high unemployment and apparently generalised social crisis in many Muslim countries has interacted with growing inequalities and injustices at the global level to encourage Islamist movements throughout much of the Muslim world (Akbar 2002). This development can also be associated more generally with widespread, failed attempts at modernisation and the impact of globalisation, Western hegemony and American domination (Milton-Edwards 2006).

Islamists are of course also concerned about domestic political, social and economic issues. Throughout the Middle East many rulers appear content to receive large personal incomes from the sale of their countries' oil for US dollars – with little in the way of beneficial development effects for the majority of their citizens. In addition, many such leaders do little to develop more representative polities, plan successfully for the future, or seek means to reduce un- and underemployment. In short, there has been a skewed modernisation process featuring, on the one hand, urbanisation and limited industrialisation and, on the other, growing numbers of dissatisfied citizens, some of whom turn to Islamist vehicles of political change to reflect their strong opposition to incumbent rulers and their developmental failures (Nasr 2001; Esposito 2002).

The contemporary Islamic revival, of which Islamism is a key aspect, is generated primarily in urban settings (Esposito 2002; Juergensmeyer 2000). The key issue is what can Islam do for Muslims in the

contemporary world? Can the faith rescue communities and societies from decline, purify them and help combat both internal and external forces of corruption and secularisation? For many Islamic radicals the Iranian Revolution of 1979 was a particularly emblematic event in this regard (Saikal 2003: 69–88). This is because the revolution enabled Ayatollah Khomeini, after the revolution the supreme political, religious and spiritual authority, to put into place and enforce *sharia* law as the law of the land, to pursue a proclaimed commitment to social justice, and to try begin to roll back western hegemony at the international level with its economic, political and cultural influences. Over time, however, despite western fears, while the revolution undoubtedly energised Islamic radicals throughout the world, it was not followed by a consequential revolutionary wave affecting the Muslim world. Instead, governments in many Muslim-majority countries – such as Algeria, Egypt and Libya – responded to real or perceived Islamist threats with a variable mixture of state-controlled re-Islamicisation, reform and coercion (Husain 1995). In response, many grassroots Islamist movements turned attention to local social and political struggles, with the overall aim of a re-Islamicisation of society ‘from below’, focusing on the requirement for personal and social behaviour necessary to be Islamically ‘authentic’, in line with religious tradition. Political violence was not rare, although not eschewed, for example in Algeria and Egypt, if judged necessary by the radicals for their community’s ‘purification’. In addition, from the 1980s and 1990s, movements within countries sought to develop transnational networks that were often difficult for states to control, contributing to conditions of social, political and economic instability in many Muslim societies (Voll 2006; Casanova 2005).

An interesting example comes from Algeria. There was much western concern

in the early 1990s as it appeared that Algeria was about to be taken over by Islamic fundamentalists who, it was believed, were about to win parliamentary elections. This fear led the governments of France and the United States to support a successful military coup d’état in early 1992 to prevent this feared outcome. The assumption was that if the radical Muslims achieved power they would summarily close down Algeria’s newly refreshed democratic institutions and political system as they had earlier done in Iran. Following the coup, the main Islamist organisations were banned, and thousands of their leaders and supporters incarcerated. A civil war followed which finally fizzled out in the early 2000s; over its course an estimated 120,000 Algerians died (Volpi 2003).

While the political rise of radical Islam in Algeria had domestic roots, it was undoubtedly strengthened by financial support from patrons such as the government of Saudi Arabia. In addition, there were the mobilising experiences of Algerian *mujahideen* (‘holy warriors’), who served in Afghanistan during the anti-Soviet war in the 1980s. On returning home, many such people were no longer content to put up with what was regarded as an un-Islamic government. There was also a large cadre of (mostly secondary) school teachers from Egypt working in Algeria at this time. Many were influenced by the ideas of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood or its radical offshoots, and they were believed to have introduced similar radical ideas to Algerian youth (Volpi 2003; Tahi 1992).

The overall point is that the emergence and consolidation of Islamism since the 1970s has had both domestic and international causes. On the one hand, in many countries its domestic appearance was often linked to failures of modernisation to deliver political and developmental promises. As a result, Etienne and Tozy argue, the Islamic resurgence of the 1980s and 1990s

carried within it Muslim ‘disillusionment with progress and the disenchantments of the first 20 years of independence’ (Etienne and Tozy 1980: 251). Faced with a state power that sought to destroy or control formerly dominant Muslim communitarian structures and replace them with values, norms, beliefs and institutions focusing on the concept of a *national citizenry* – based on the link between the state and the individual – popular (as opposed to state-controlled) Islamist movements emerged in many Muslim countries. In short, the Muslim political ‘re-awakening’ expressed in various expressions of Islamism can usefully be seen primarily in relation to its *domestic* capacity to oppose the state: ‘It is primarily in civil society that one sees Islam at work’ (Coulon 1983: 49). In addition, there are significant international issues that have also encouraged Islamist worldviews, notably the perceived unjust impact of globalisation and western economic and cultural power.

### Christian fundamentalism

We have seen that for some Muslims, poverty and declining faith in the developmental and political abilities of their governments led to their being receptive to Islamist arguments. In such circumstances, poverty and feelings of hopelessness may be exacerbated by withering of community ties – especially when people move from the countryside to the town in a search for paid employment. When traditional communal and familial ties are seriously stretched or sundered, religion-orientated ones may replace them, often appealing to the poor and dispossessed. In the United States, on the other hand, Christian fundamentalists are found among all strata of society – including affluent, successful people (Wald 1991: 271). Clearly, it would be absurd to argue that poverty and alienation explain the widespread existence

of Christian fundamentalists in the USA. In fact, as we noted earlier, Christian fundamentalism in the USA is quintessentially modern, offering a response to contemporary conditions and events.

It is not however only in the United States that one finds significant groups of people that are classified as ‘Christian fundamentalists’. Africa has millions of such people who, like their Muslim counterparts, see a religious fundamentalist worldview as a necessary corrective to failed modernisation. In regard to Africa, some scholars link the failed developmental promises of independence in the 1960s to the rise of Christian fundamentalism several decades later (Gifford 2004; Haynes 1996). In such views, Christian fundamentalism is reactive against unwelcome manifestations of modernisation – such as poverty, marginalisation and insecurity. In addition, in some cases, such as Nigeria, a turn to Christian fundamentalist worldviews has coincided with a perception that many local Muslims are increasingly belligerent and assertive (Isaacs 2003).

The recent growth of Christian fundamentalism in various parts of the developing world, notably Latin America and Africa, is said to be the result of a merging of two existing strands of Christian belief – pentecostalism and conservative Protestantism (Gifford 1990). American television evangelists, such as Pat Robertson, Jim and Tammy Bakker, Jimmy Swaggart and Oral Roberts, were instrumental in bringing together the two strands in the 1970s and 1980s. Such people often call themselves ‘born again’ Christians. They may either remain in the mainline Protestant denominations (for example, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist and Lutheran), or in the Catholic Church (where they are known as ‘charismatics’), or who worship in their own denominational churches (Gifford 1991).

Generally, ‘born again’ Christians stress religious elements associated with pentecostalism: that is, experiential faith, the

centrality of the Holy Spirit, and the spiritual gifts of glossolalia ('speaking in tongues'), faith healing and miracles. Such people are 'fundamentalist' in the sense of wishing to get back to the fundamentals of the faith as they see them. The 'born again' worldview is embedded in certain dogmatic fundamentals of Christianity, with emphasis placed on the authority of the Bible in all matters of faith and practice; on personal conversion as a distinct experience of faith in Christ as Lord and Saviour (being 'born again' in the sense of having received a new spiritual life); and, evangelically, in helping others have a similar conversion experience.

To this end, some churches sponsor missionaries who are required to look to 'God alone' (by way of followers' contributions) for their financial support. They may believe that their church is a lone force for good on earth, locked in battle with the forces of evil; the latter may even manifest itself in the form of Christians who do not adhere to the 'born again' worldview. Unsurprisingly, such 'born again' conservatives are often strongly opposed to the ecumenical movement – because of its more liberal theological views, which may include a concern for social action in pursuit of developmental goals, in tandem with spiritual concerns.

'Born again' Christians typically seek God through personal searching rather than through the mediation of a hierarchical institution. The aim is to make beneficial changes to one's life spiritually and life chances through communion and other interaction with like-minded individuals. To this end, groups may come together to pray and to work for both spiritual redemption and material prosperity, sometimes perceived as inseparable from each other. When the latter goal – that of material prosperity – is seen as paramount, this can lead to charges that it is in fact little more than a 'mindless and self-centred appeal to personal well-being' (Deiros 1991: 149–50).

In sum, 'born again' Christians may see themselves as offering converts two main benefits: worldly self-improvement and ultimate salvation, within a context of what are perceived as Christian 'fundamentals', including a strong belief in the perceived inerrancy of the Bible.

Some accounts suggest that members of such 'born again' groups are politically more conservative than those in the mainstream churches and that such people are willing to submit, rather unquestioningly, to those in authority (Moran and Schlemmer 1984; Roberts 1968). In addition, they are said to assimilate easily to the norms of consumer capitalism which helps further to defuse any challenges to the extant political order (Martin 1990: 160). In addition, in theological and academic debates they are often judged in relation to two other issues: their contribution to personal, social and political 'liberation', and their potential or actual role as purveyors of American or other foreign cultural dogma in non-western parts of the world. It is also claimed that the 'born again' doctrine may offer converts hope – but it is a hope without practical manifestation in the world of here and now; it does not help with people's concrete problems nor in the creation of group and class solidarities essential to tackle socio-political concerns (Martin 1990: 233). The reason for this political conservatism, it is alleged, is that conservative evangelical churches collectively form an American movement of sinister intent (Gifford 1991).

Cognisant of such concerns, the spread of conservative American-style 'born again' churches in Africa, Latin America and elsewhere was greeted with concern by leaders of the established Protestant and Catholic churches, who saw their followers leaving for the new churches in large numbers. Often sponsored by American television evangelists and local churches, thousands of born-again foreign crusaders were seen to promote American-style

religion and, in some cases, conservative politics from the 1980s. Ardently anti-communist, they worked to convert as many ordinary people as possible to a conservative Christian faith and in the process, it is argued, to promote America's political goals (d'Antonio 1990).

It was also alleged that a new religio-political hegemony emerged as a result of the impact of American fundamentalist evangelicals. Pieterse asserts, for example, that the so-called 'faith' movement gained the cultural leadership of Christianity in many parts of the 'developing' world, largely because of its social prestige and ideological persuasiveness (Pieterse 1992: 10–11). It was said that norms, beliefs and values favourable to the interests of the USA were disseminated among the believers as a fundamental part of religious messages. What this amounts to is that individuals who converted to the American-style evangelical churches were, it was claimed, victims of manipulation by this latest manifestation of neo-colonialism; the objective was not, as in the past, to spirit away material resources from colonial areas, but rather to deflect popular efforts away from seeking necessary political and economic structural changes, in order to serve American strategic interests and those of American transnational corporations.

### **Jewish fundamentalism**

Since the establishment of the state of Israel as a homeland for the Jews in 1948, there has been intense controversy in the country over whether the state should be a modern, western-style country – that is, where normally religion would be privatised – or a *Jewish* state with Judaist law and customs taking precedence over secular ones. Luckmann noted several decades ago that the state of Israel was characterised by a process of bureaucratisation along

rational business lines, reflecting for many Jewish Israelis, he argued, accommodation to an increasingly 'secular' way of life (Luckmann 1969: 147). According to Weber's well-known classificatory schema, Israel would be judged a 'modern' state, that is, with a powerful legislative body (the Knesset) enacting the law; an executive authority – the government – conducting the affairs of the state; a disinterested judiciary enforcing the law and protecting the rights of individuals; an extensive bureaucracy regulating and organising educational, social and cultural matters; and with security services – notably the police and the armed forces – protecting the state from internal and external attack (Weber 1978: 56).

Yet, to many people, Israel is not 'just' another western state. This is largely because in recent years religion seems to have gained an increasingly central public role. Religious Jews warn of the social catastrophes that they believe will inevitably occur in their increasingly secular, progressively more 'godless', society, while many non-religious Jews see such people as intolerant religious fanatics: Jewish fundamentalists. Such matters came to a head in November 1995. The then Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, was assassinated by Yigal Amir, a 25-year-old Jewish fundamentalist, because of Rabin's willingness to negotiate with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) to end its conflict with the state of Israel. Rabin's murder led some Israelis to fear that violence would increasingly characterise the already tense relationship between religious and secular Jews. Yet what appeared initially to some observers to be the onset of a religious war among the Jews eventually only had a limited impact in Israel, a setting where, despite much intense political and social conflict, religious interests were not consistently powerful enough to determine major issues of public policy (Sandler 2006: 46–7).

On the other hand, the murder of Rabin by a Jewish fundamentalist appeared to be a clear manifestation of the willingness of 'Jewish fundamentalists [to] attack Jews with secularist leanings' in pursuit of their religious and political agendas (Bealey 1999: 140). The killing of Rabin also served to focus attention on the growing polarisation in Israel between, on the one hand, non-religious or secular Jews, and, on the other, highly religious or 'fundamentalist' Jews. The latter are characterised by a determination personally to follow the 'fundamentals' of Judaism as they see them – and work towards getting them observed in both public and private life (Silberstein 1993; Ravitsky 1993). Contemporary Jewish fundamentalism – manifested by organisations such as Gush Emunim – is believed, in part, to be a result of the impact of Israel's victory over the Arabs in the 1967 war (Sprinzak 1993). For many religious Jews this was a particular triumph as it led to the regaining of the holiest sites in Judaism from Arab control, including Jerusalem, the Temple Mount, the Western Wall, and Hebron. This was taken as a sign of divine deliverance, an indication of impending redemption. Even some secular Jews spoke of the war's outcome in theological terms.

Jewish identity has long been understood as an overlapping combination of religion and nation. Put another way, the Jews of Israel tend to think of themselves as a nation inhabiting a *Jewish* state created by their covenant with God (Ravitsky 1993). The interpretation of the covenant and its implications gave rise to the characteristic beliefs and practices of the Jewish people. Vital to this covenant was the promise of the land of Israel. Following their historical dispersions under first the Babylonians and then Romans, Jews had prayed for centuries for the end of their exile and a return to Israel.

However, except for small numbers, Jews lived for centuries in exile, often in separate communities. During the Diaspora while awaiting divine redemption to return them to their homeland, many Jews' lives were defined by *halacha* (religious law), which served as a national component of Jewish identity. The Jews' historical suffering during the Diaspora was understood as a necessary continuation of the special dedication of the community to God. In sum, Jewish fundamentalist groups in Israel are characterised by an utter unwillingness to negotiate with Palestinians over what they see as land given by God to the Jews for their use in perpetuity. In addition, especially since the Israeli government cleared the Gaza strip of Jewish settlements in August 2005, there has been another issue of massive importance to many Jewish fundamentalists. Sandler puts it like this: 'Who or what prevails? Is it the law of God or the law of the State?' (Sandler 2006: 47). For Jewish fundamentalists, the issue is especially significant and difficult to resolve as both the contemporary State of Israel and the biblical 'Land of Israel' have important religious associations.

## Conclusion

The concept of popular religious interpretations, including religious fundamentalist ones, is not new; there have always been opponents of mainstream religious interpretations. What is novel, however, is that in the past manifestations of popular religion were normally bundled up within strong frameworks that held them together, serving to police the most extreme tendencies, as in the Christian churches, or were at least nominally under the control of the mainline religion – as with popular sects in Islam. In the contemporary era, however, it is no longer

possible to keep all religious tendencies within traditional organising frameworks. This is primarily a consequence of two developments: (1) widespread, destabilising change after World War II – summarised here as modernisation and secularisation; and (2) religious privatisation, in both the developed and developing worlds.

Religious fundamentalism is particularly associated with the Abrahamic ‘religions of the book’ (Islam, Christianity and Judaism). Scriptural revelations relating to political, moral and social issues form the corpus of fundamentalist demands. Sometimes these are markedly conservative (most US or African Christian fundamentalists), sometimes they are politically reformist or even revolutionary (some Islamist groups), and sometimes they are xenophobic, racist and reactionary (some Jewish fundamentalist groups, such as Gush Emunim, Kach and Kahane Chai, and various Islamist groups).

While secularisation is the ‘normal’ – and continuing – state of affairs in most societies away from western Europe, the various fundamentalist groups examined in this chapter tend to share a disaffection and dissatisfaction with established, hierarchical, institutionalised religious bodies; a desire to find God through personal searching rather than through the mediation of institutions; and a belief in communities’ ability to make beneficial changes to their lives through the application of group effort. This desire to ‘go it alone’, not to be beholden to ‘superior’ bodies, tends to characterise many of the groups we have examined. For some, religion offers a rational alternative to those to whom modernisation has either failed or is in some way unattractive. Its interaction with political issues over the medium term is likely to be of especial importance, carrying a serious and seminal message of societal resurgence and regeneration in relation both to political leaders and economic elites.

## Note

- 1 The term Imam means a male spiritual and temporal leader regarded by Shi’ites as a descendant of Muhammad, divinely appointed to guide humans.

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# 12

## Religion and the state

*John Madeley*

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There is, it seems, no Archimedian point from which the relationships between religion and the state can be observed. While in the early twenty-first century the modern state is the key template for political organization across the globe, its form and function remain matters of ongoing dispute. Responsibility for the management of affairs affecting the physical and material security of citizens is generally accepted but on wider issues – including how it should relate to religious concerns – radicals, liberals, conservatives and reactionaries of various hues continue to engage in seemingly unresolvable controversy. The liberal democratic option of ruling that such concerns are no proper business of the state and should as far as possible be kept off the political agenda has failed to attract general agreement even in the more prosperous parts of the first world (Madeley 2003a). Elsewhere, where material conditions are much less favourable, issues of state–religion relations often appear to occupy centre stage. The existence of different worldviews encapsulated in, or extrapolated from, contrasting religious traditions continue to make for incommensurable and, even, non-compossible standpoints on important issues.

Any survey of the relations between religion and the state has to take account of the enormous variety of traditions,

institutional forms and ethical drives to be found in each of the two spheres. Even operating with mainstream Western conceptualizations of the principal terms the range of combinations identifiable across world history is as vast as it is in detail complex. Traditionally, most treatments have reduced the scope and range of these complexities to manageable proportions by addressing them through the Western lens of ‘church–state relations’ where the term church is taken to represent all religious bodies and organizations (and so, in addition to actual churches: denominations, sects, cults, religious orders etc.) and the term state is assumed to represent instances of the modern state conceived in Weberian terms as based on successful claims to territorial sovereignty. However, this foreshortening of focus with its distinctly ethnocentric underlying assumptions as to what counts as religion and the state systematically underestimates the actual range of variation to be found in the other parts of the world and at other times.

Within political science attention to the contemporary political significance of religious traditions and how they relate to different forms of the state has been a relatively recent phenomenon. When in the 1950s the field of comparative politics was extended from a concentration on Western political systems to address the major changes occurring in the then newly independent states

of the developing world, the subject remained peripheral. This peripherality was reinforced by that fact that one of the principal organizing concepts which came to dominate comparative politics at the time was modernization, understood crudely as the process whereby 'traditional' societies became 'modern'. Modernization theory rested on evolutionary assumptions which postulated that interlinked trends of economic, social, cultural and political development combined to make for the differentiation of structures and specialization of functions thought to be characteristic of modern societies.

Some attempted to refine the evolutionary scheme which underlay modernization theory by identifying stages which could explain the observed variety of different cultures in terms of their having stabilized at different stages. Thus Bellah developed a classification of five stages of religious development: primitive, archaic, historic, early modern and modern, each marked by combinations of distinct features of belief, ritual practice and organizational type (Bellah 1964). A particularly important threshold in this developmental sequence was seen to have occurred between the so-called archaic and historic phases. Prior to this transition the beginnings of priesthood could be found as specialists in healing and shamanistic practices began to emerge. With the shift to the historic stage, however, religion became increasingly transcendental in its reference as the gods and the sacred realm were understood more and more as separate from the natural world and a more elevated concern with salvation took hold. Coincidentally the emergent institution of a priesthood achieved a degree of autonomy, the political and religious spheres tended to become distinct and the possibility arose for the first time of tensions and conflict between holders of authority in the two spheres. This change appears to correspond to what Karl Jaspers identified

as the great Axial Shift, occurring across much of the globe from about the sixth century BCE (Eisenstadt 1986).

For all its relevance to the emergence of separate spheres of religion and the state and the relation between them, evolutionary conceptual schemes of this sort suggested that variations between the different religious traditions of the world arose principally from the level of development each attained. For Weber, however, many important variations could not be explained in this fashion (Gerth and Mills 1948). Thus his key distinction between the traditions of Oriental mysticism and Occidental asceticism could not be taken to imply that the other-worldly salvationist orientation of Hinduism, for example, indicated that it had developed to a higher level than the this-worldly asceticism which emerged within the context of Judaism and some branches of Christianity. Despite the evolutionary bias of the modernization paradigm some texts produced from within it attempted to take account of these dimensions of difference. Thus D.E. Smith in 1970 examined the connections between religion and 'political development' in the context of the process of modernization understood characteristically as 'fundamentally one of differentiation, by which integralist sacral societies governed by religiopolitical systems are being transformed into pluralist desacralized societies directed by greatly expanded secular polities' (Smith 1970: 1). Despite the claimed commonality of sacral political systems as recently as 1800 however, Smith also pointed to important ideational and structural contrasts to be found between Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim and Catholic traditions and how these contrasts made for distinctive orientations towards the state.

A growing appreciation of the significance of qualitative contrasts contributed to the virtual abandonment of modernization theory and directed attention instead

to the role of episodic change occurring around critical discontinuities in the history of particular societies, cultures and traditions. Weber's analogy comparing decisive historical junctures with the points on railway tracks which send trains off in one direction or another (with unavoidable 'path-dependent' consequences) highlighted the importance of these discontinuities for explaining contrasting patterns of institutional and cultural change, not least in the area of relations between religion and the state (Gerth and Mills 1948). Taking the case of Christianity, the variety of state forms with which it has been confronted over its two millennia of existence as a distinct tradition has spanned Roman colonial administration in first-century Palestine, to pagan empire, to Christian empire(s) of contrasting types, to feudal lordships, city-states, principalities (both civil and ecclesiastical), papal states, republics, kingdoms, authoritarian dictatorships, both sympathetic and antagonistic, and to a variety of forms of (liberal) democracy. In some of these formations, particular Christian traditions have been marginal and actively persecuted and in others overwhelmingly dominant and influential, while in most they have been located somewhere in between – and in each case attitudes toward, and linkages with, the temporal authorities have varied markedly. Certainly, with regard to the Christian case it is difficult to argue that there has been a uniform trend of development from some undifferentiated pristine community cult towards its current condition in most of the West, as an enclave of religiosity in otherwise largely secular environments. Rather, the picture is one of cyclical movement through many phases, starting from: sectarian separation and persecution, rising to imperial church, then claimant to supreme source of all authority temporal and spiritual, followed by a decline into serving as an instrument of temporal authority under the early-modern state

and, finally in the modern era, being made serially to relinquish its claims to exercise authority anywhere except within its own increasingly circumscribed religious jurisdiction. The trend line of the development of the state can also be seen as cyclical only in the obverse to that of the church(es): when state power has waned, as at various times in the middle ages, the religious institution's claims to authority waxed and vice versa.

One important strand of evolutionary modernization theory has maintained a stubborn – if more and more embattled – resistance among sociologists of religion: secularization theory. According to José Casanova (1994), by the 1960s secularization theory had achieved the rare feat in the social sciences of attaining virtual paradigm status. Nor have its continuing rearguard defenders been lacking, despite retractions from some of its most distinguished expositors, such as Peter Berger (1999), while other analysts have adopted more nuanced stands. In 1978 David Martin presented a dense analysis which was one of the first systematically to stress the role of critical historical junctures in bringing about, deflecting and occasionally reversing secularization trends in the territories of particular states (Martin 1978). In 1994 Casanova argued in similar vein that secularization theory should not be treated as a coherent set of propositions but as three distinct ones, only one of which (secularization as differentiation) could be defended as the valid core proposition.

For many normative theorists of liberal democracy separation of religion and state (reflecting the differentiation between the two spheres) was until recently a matter of widespread consensus: a system that did not institutionalize this basic requirement could scarcely qualify as a liberal democracy at all. The ongoing resurgence of the religious factor in politics across the world has, however, led to a re-examination of the empirical link between church–state

separation and liberal democracy. For example, Alfred Stepan points out that ‘virtually no Western European democracy now has a rigid or hostile separation of church and state’ (Stepan 2001: 222). Normative disagreements about state–religion separation in the liberal democracies is, however, as a distant echo compared to the din heard elsewhere in parts of the world, especially following the impact of such ‘frame-setting events’ as the 1979 Iranian revolution and September 11, 2001 (‘9/11’). As Halliday put it, the Iranian revolution posed a particular challenge to observers of world affairs, that of explaining how for the first time in modern history (that is, since the great French revolution of 1789), ‘a revolution took place in which the dominant ideology, forms of organization, leading personnel and proclaimed goal were all religious in appearance and inspiration’ (Halliday 1995: 43). Although the Iranian revolution did not, as feared by many and hoped by some, spread widely to other countries, as had occurred in the wake of the French revolutionary wars two centuries earlier, it did occur at a time when the resurgence of the religious factor in politics was evermore evident in many places around the world.

Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart (2004) have shown convincingly that secularization, understood as the progressive decline in levels of belief and observance in the principal mainstream forms of organized religion, has clearly progressed only in the world’s most economically developed countries, except for the United States. However, since these societies currently account for a decreasing proportion of the population of the planet and other, less well-favoured, societies generally exhibit a resurgence of religious belief and observance, it can be said that overall the world is becoming in an important sense more, not less, religious. In this context the political mobilization of fundamentalist forms of many of the world religions,

including Christianity, has made the issue of state–religion relations increasingly one of practical concern as well as academic interest. What the French call the ‘integralism’ of fundamentalist movements stands witness to the continuing possibility that trends of secularization (whether as decline, differentiation or privatization) can under certain circumstances be stopped dead in their tracks and reversed by projects of radical de-differentiation, even on occasion under the literal ‘presidency’ of religious figures and institutions, as in Iran. In this context it is interesting to examine the case of Europe: in most of its Western part, one of the most secular parts of the globe and yet, as noted by Stepan (2001), one marked by sets of religion–state relations across all its fifty-odd territories which the Supreme Court of the USA with its separationist rule would not tolerate in even one of its fifty constituent states.

### **Religion and the state in modern Europe**

The record of the relations between religion and the state over time and space in Europe illustrates perhaps better than any other, the decisive role critical junctures have played in marking the shifts between often radically contrasting patterns of state–religion relations. While it can be claimed that it was in the USA that the constitutional format of the secular state was invented, it was in medieval Europe that the underlying distinction between the religious and the secular was first elaborated (Ward 2000). From the time of its birth as a distinctive religious tradition, Christianity famously distinguished between what was due to Caesar and to God, something which it was easier to do for as long as Caesar was both pagan and, occasionally, an author of persecution. When the Emperor became the supporter and enforcer of the Christian cult, however, the distinction

became progressively blurred – only to reassert itself when the papacy in the eleventh-century bid for recognition as the fount of all power on earth; this occurred when Pope Gregory VII reiterated the long-standing claim to the precedence of papal over royal authority at a time when it seemed there was, at least briefly, the possibility of making a reality of this pretension. It was arguably at this time that the concept of the distinction between secular and religious took a decisive form, becoming fixed in a way which identified the church with a superordinate religious and spiritual sphere and the state with the subordinate secular and temporal sphere (Badie and Birnbaum 1983: 87). One of the perversities arising from this invidious distinction is that the state itself could no longer be seen as a subject of secularization because of the declaration that it was definitionally secular – and could not therefore itself be subject to secularizing trends. Yet it is obvious that the instrumentalities of state power and authority can – and indeed often have been – dedicated to and utilized for religious ends in Christian Europe as much as in other parts of the world: in other words, that states have at times been and in a number of cases remain in some non-trivial sense religious.

In the West European case during the middle ages when the papacy attempted to assert its claims to feudal precedence, monarchs were routinely consecrated at their coronations by high church officials, usually archbishops, bishops, metropolitans or even, as in the case of Charlemagne, by the pope in Rome. Church involvement in these ceremonies was transparently intended, *inter alia*, to ensure by the administering of oaths that the crowned monarchs would undertake to recognize the authority of the popes and support the church in its divine mission. While the church was itself always careful to distinguish the separate spheres of the spiritual *sacerdotium* from the temporal *regnum*, and

to assert its claim to sole jurisdiction in the former, it also maintained the duty of the temporal authorities to aid it in serving its religious ends, however indirectly. Nor did the Reformation, despite the seismic changes which it wrought in church–state relations in the sixteenth century, put an end to the notion that the temporal authorities had religious as well as temporal responsibilities. Indeed, on one view, the Reformation can be seen in the countries where it became institutionalized as greatly extending the scope of religious duties to all holders of public office. From a Catholic point of view it represented the disastrous triumph of the secular over the religious sphere: ‘If before, it was the religious realm which appeared to be the all-encompassing reality, within which the secular realm found its proper place, now the secular sphere will be the all-encompassing reality, to which the religious sphere will have to adapt’ (Casanova 1994: 15). The alternative view, stressed by Weber (Gerth and Mills 1948), was that the removal of the barriers between religious and secular spaces had the effect of releasing the religious impulse from its previous confines, thereby allowing it to permeate the wider society, so that, for example, the idea of God-given vocations was extended to cover all legitimate roles in society – to ploughmen and princes, as much as to priests and prelates. This radical shift was all the more significant since it coincided with and contributed (not least by the transfer of church property and wealth to the coffers of the state authorities) to the emergence of the modern state. In both ideological and material terms this particular critical juncture was, it is interesting to note, both modernising and radically de-differentiating.

The emergent pattern of the modern state was in fact from its beginnings in sixteenth-century Europe a confessional institution committed to its favoured religious tradition. The birth of the modern state system, which is conventionally dated

from the 1648 Peace of Westphalia, did require the signatories henceforth to desist from attempts by diplomacy or war from changing the religious adherence of target populations but this secularizing requirement only affected the external relations between states. Internally by contrast, Westphalia buttressed the prohibition against religious war by insisting on the sovereign right of the state authorities of a given territory to impose a particular confession on their subject populations on the basis of the *cuius regio eius religio* rule (literally, whose the region, to him the religion), inherited from the 1555 Treaty of Augsburg and now, finally, set in stone. In fact, from 1648 onwards, recognition of the exclusive authority of the state in matters of religion led to a new and decisive phase in the consolidation of church settlements aimed at enforcing conformity to the locally established religion and penalizing or expelling those who refused to conform. This process of the 'confessionalization' of populations continued after 1648 for a long time, signified by such notorious episodes as the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, which ended the toleration of Protestantism in France in 1685, and the expulsion of many thousands of Protestants from the archbishopric of Salzburg in the 1720s. As Rémond points out under the *ancien régime* governments which ruled over most of the European Continent until the French Revolution of 1789, a so-called regalist tradition obtained virtually regardless of confessional differences: 'It asserted the superiority of the secular power over the churches. ... It did not necessarily proceed from animosity towards the church; the same power that closely controlled the clergy held them in honour and showed consideration and respect for religion. *Ancien régime* governments shared the conviction, then generally held, that society was unable to do without religion and that the state had authority and responsibilities in the matter' (Rémond 1999: 79–80).

More than a century after the 1789 French Revolution had made the first decisive departure from the entrenched tradition of state confessionalism in Europe, it is remarkable that church establishment of one sort or another remained firmly in place across most of Europe. In 1900 as Table 12.1 illustrates, despite the progressive de-linking of citizenship from church membership, the largest churches almost everywhere continued to benefit from advantageous arrangements with the state authorities. This was most particularly the case in the three mono-confessional blocs which occupied the Lutheran northern, Roman Catholic southern and Orthodox eastern parts of Europe (Madeley 2003b; Knippenberg 2006). Even in Italy, where since 1870 the Vatican had refused to accept the loss of the Papal Territories and recognize the legitimacy of the then newly-united Kingdom of Italy, the Catholic Church's overwhelmingly dominant position persisted. In the multi-confessional belt which spanned from Ireland in north-western Europe through Britain, the Netherlands, southern Germany, Switzerland, Bohemia and Hungary all the way into the Transylvanian part of Romania, relations between the different religious institutions and the state were complex not least because of the coexistence within many individual territories of substantial populations of different confessional adherence. Even in those territories, however, the predominant pattern was one of establishment of the historically dominant confession twinned with the more or less *de facto* toleration of the principal religious minorities.

In addition to their confessional affiliations the actual forms of establishment varied a great deal. In France, where the Roman Catholic Church had been restored under the terms of the 1802 Concordat and the associated Organic Articles, Catholicism was recognized not as a – or the – state religion but as the religion of the great



**Table 12.1** The religiosity of states in Europe (*de jure*), 1900–2000

<i>Empire groups as of 1900</i>	<i>National territories</i>	<i>I: 1900</i>	<i>II: 1970</i>	<i>III: 2000</i>	<i>IV: Absolute conf. majority % in 2000</i>
	Andorra	RC	RC	RC	RC: 89
	Belgium	R	R	R	RC: 81
	Denmark	RL	RL	RL	RL: 86
	Iceland	RL	RL	RL	RL: 99
	France	R	S	S	RC: 70
	Germany	R	R	S	No abs. maj.
	Greece	RO	RO	RO	RO: 93
	Italy	RC	RC	RC	RC: 85
	Liechtenstein	RC	RC	RC	RC: 80
	Luxembourg	RC	RC	RC	RC: 97
	Netherlands	S	S	S	No abs. maj.
	(Poland)	R	A	RC*	RC: 92
	Portugal	RC	RC	RC	RC: 97
	Romania	RO	A	RO*	RO: 77
	Spain	RC	RC	RC	RC: 99
	Sweden	RL	RL	R**	RL: 84
	Norway	RL	RL	RL	RL: 95
	Switzerland	R	R	R	No abs. maj.
	(Yugoslavia)	R	A	RO*	RO: 60
United Kingdom	Britain	RA	RA	RA	RA: 53
	Ireland	RC	RC	R	RC: 92
	Malta	RC	RC	RC	RC: 91
Russian Empire	Russia	RO	A	S	RO: 52
	Armenia	OO	A	OO	OO: 92
	Azerbaijan	RI	A	RI	RI: 95
	Belarus	RO	A	RO	RO: 70
	Ukraine	RO	A	RO	RO: 54
	Estonia	R	A	S	No abs. maj.
	Finland	RX	RX	RX	RL: 89
	Georgia	RO	A	RO	RO: 75
	Latvia	RO	A	S	No abs. maj.
	Lithuania	RO	A	S	RC: 85
	Moldova	RO	A	RO	RO: 70
Austria-Hungary	Austria	R	S	S	RC: 78
	Czech Rep.	R	A	RC	No abs. maj.
	Bosnia-Herz.	R	A	RI	No abs. maj.
	Croatia	RC	A	RC	RC: 89
	Hungary	R	A	S*	RC: 58
	Slovakia	R	A	S	RC: 67
	Slovenia	RC**	A	RC**	RC: 76
Ottoman Empire	Turkey	RI	S	S	RI: 100
	Albania	RI	A	S	RI: 65
	Bulgaria	R	A	RO*	RO: 82
	Cyprus	R	R	R	RO: 78/RI: 99
	Macedonia	RO	A	RO	RO: 59

Sources: Barrett *et al.* (1982) and Barrett *et al.* (2001) supplemented by 2005 Annual Report on International Religious Freedom: Europe and the New Independent States (US Dept of State, Sept. 2005); Inglehart and Norris dataset for the last column.

Notes: \*These attributions changed (from A) on the basis of information culled from the more recent source (see below).

\*\* Changed attribution: formal disestablishment of the Lutheran church occurred in January 2000.

\*\*\* Corrected attribution (in Barrett (2001) listed as RO).

Codes: A Atheistic; R Religious (unspecified); RA Anglican; RC Roman Catholic; RI Islamic; RL Lutheran; RO Orthodox; RX (Finland only) Lutheran and Orthodox; OO (Armenia only) Oriental Orthodox; S Secular.

majority of the French nation. Alongside it, furthermore, Protestants and Jews each received official recognition and state support. In the United Kingdom the Anglican state church retained full and formal established status in England and Wales and the Presbyterian Church of Scotland remained the officially recognized national church. Other systems of multiple establishment could be found at or below state level in the multi-confessional territories – in Switzerland, for example. Finland, which stood at the northern end of a second multi-confessional belt running north–south along the border between Eastern Orthodoxy and the other confessions, a unique system of dual establishment – Lutheran and Orthodox state churches alongside each other over the same undivided territory – existed. In those parts of Europe where the eighteenth-century Enlightenment had impacted either through the action of the so-called Enlightened Despots such as Frederick the Great in Prussia, Joseph II in Austria and Catherine the Great in Russia or through the later, and more forceful, intervention of the French revolutionary armies, systems of religious establishment had on the whole made a successful, if partial, return after 1815. In the case of Austria, for example, the 1855 Concordat with the Vatican abandoned the policy which has been inaugurated by Joseph II and removed all Catholic education from state control, placing it again under the exclusive jurisdiction of the bishops. Around 1900 in Eastern Europe the trend was also towards reinforcing the principle of religious establishment; in the Russian Empire, for example, under the influence of the reactionary Konstantin Pobedonostsev (Overprocurator of the Holy Synod from 1880 to 1905) Russian Orthodoxy was ruthlessly promoted even in the peripheral territories where Lutheranism (in the northern Baltics) Catholicism (in Poland) and Armenian Orthodoxy (in Armenia)

had previously enjoyed a measure of toleration and even privilege.

As Table 12.1 indicates, in 1900 all but one of Europe's 45 territories were occupied by states which could still be judged *de jure* 'religious'; that is, officially committed in one way or another to the support of either a particular religion or religions (31 cases) or to religion in general (14 cases). The one exception identified is the Netherlands which is labelled *de jure* 'secular'. In that country a series of constitutional and other enactments in the nineteenth century had progressively extended the reach of individual and corporate religious freedoms. The Dutch Reformed Church had been disestablished in the 1790s but this had not ushered in full religious freedom; the 1801 Constitution required, for example, that at the age of 14 every independent person of either sex must register with a church denomination (Bijsterveld 1996: 209). In 1815, when the United Kingdom of the Netherlands incorporated the southern Catholic provinces (until 1830), the previous state church was not re-established; instead, the principle that the state should not interfere in the internal affairs of religious organizations was laid down. In 1848 when constitutional amendments opened the way for the Roman Catholic Church to restore its hierarchy, a new article was adopted which allowed religious processions only under a set of restrictive provisions which effectively amounted to a *de facto* ban (Bijsterveld 1996: 211). Other marks of state secularity in 1900 were the ban on clergy celebrating a religious marriage prior to a mandatory civil marriage and the facts that no concordat had been negotiated with the Vatican and that no specific ministry for religious affairs had existed since 1871. The state did however continue to make a contribution to the salaries and pensions of church ministers and maintained theological faculties in the state universities in addition

to subsidizing a number of free theological colleges.

The foundations of the inherited systems of church establishment, which still survived across almost all of Europe, were by 1900 nonetheless under threat. In most countries religious freedoms had expanded, albeit at different paces and occasionally with reversals, so that establishments could rely for their maintenance less on the negative penal disciplines with which state authorities had once supported them. In France where tensions between clericals and anticlericals had run especially high in the 1890s, as reflected for example in the storm around the Dreyfus affair, matters came to a head soon after 1900 and issued in a decisive change which made France Europe's first *laïciste* (or *secularist*, as opposed to merely *secular*) state. The Law of Separation of 1905 proclaimed that henceforth the Republic would neither recognize nor subsidize, any religious confession or cult whatsoever, thereby *inter alia* unilaterally annulling the Concordat of 1802 (Rémond 1999: 149). In Britain at around the same time non-conformist agitation for Anglican disestablishment in Wales was rising on the back of a dispute about the funding of religious education, a classic issue wherever church–state tensions arose, and in 1914 the decisive vote was taken to disestablish, something which finally came into effect in 1920.

If the principle of formal church establishment was already being pegged back in parts of Western Europe before 1914, the First World War and its outcome acted as a major 'extinction event', especially in Eastern Europe where the great land empires were finally broken up. In Russia the Orthodox Church was disestablished three months after the Bolsheviks seized power in late 1917; it was thereby reduced to the status of a mere religious association with no corporate personality and thus prevented from owning property. Accordingly, all lands and buildings which

had previously belonged to it were nationalised. In Georgia and Armenia the Orthodox churches were also disestablished after a brief experiment with independence from the Soviet Union but in the parts of the Russian Empire which succeeded in gaining their independence around this time (Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland) establishment of the locally dominant confession was either confirmed or reinforced. The end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918 also spelt the end of church establishment in Austria itself, Hungary, and the territories which became part of the 'Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes' (from 1921 Yugoslavia). Similarly in Germany the Weimar constitution of 1919 formally disestablished the state church while allowing for cooperation in matters of religious education in the public schools, the raising of the *Kirchensteuer* (a church tax collected by the state tax authorities), and military chaplaincies (Robbers 1996: 58). And, finally, at the south-eastern corner of Europe after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire the Kemalist regime not only abolished the caliphate in 1923 but also launched a radical campaign of state-enforced secularization which prohibited the use of conspicuous religious dress (including the *hijab* for women and the *fez* for men) in public, while subjecting all religious bodies to close state control under a Ministry of Religious Affairs.

Some contemporary commentators concluded that all these developments indicated that church establishment had finally been consigned to the dustbin of history (Wyduckel 2001: 169). Its survival in different confessional guises in the Nordic countries, the Iberian peninsula, and the Orthodox states of the continent's south-east were seen as anomalous and likely soon to suffer the same dismal fate as the necessary lessons of modernity were finally absorbed. In Catholic thinking state churches – despite their virtual existence

in the small overwhelmingly Catholic states of Liechtenstein, Malta and Monaco – had never been fully legitimate institutional forms, often having come into existence on the back of an unwelcome entanglement with the local temporal authorities. The arrangement preferred by the Vatican was instead friendly cooperation between church and state within a particular territory on the basis of Concordats, that is, treaties which were negotiated to protect the autonomy of the church within the spiritual sphere and to provide favourable conditions for its mission within civil society. It was on such a basis that relations between the Vatican itself and the Italian state were finally settled with the Lateran Pact of 1929 – a series of Concordat agreements which also finally regularized the existence of Europe's only remaining church–state: the State of Vatican City. Four years later major concordat agreements were also signed in 1933 with Germany and Austria. In Spain, where the Latin pattern of clerical–anticlerical confrontation was starkly exemplified in a series of violent political oscillations, 1931 saw the establishment of a Second Republic, the separation of church and state, the nationalization of church property, the abolition of state support, the secularization of the education system and the expulsion of the Jesuits. By the end of the decade, however, after three years of bitter civil war, Franco's authoritarian regime had reversed the situation once again and firmly entrenched a system of National Catholicism.

Following World War II in 1945, a wave of democratization swept Western Europe as complete disenchantment with the authoritarian and totalitarian alternatives of fascism, Nazism and communism set in. Christian Democratic parties were among the beneficiaries of this rejection of both extremes of left and right alternatives on the continent and it was largely under governments dominated by them that

post-war reconstruction was taken forward. Aside from the critical economic revival over which they presided they were also responsible for ensuring conditions favourable to the principal religious institutions in their several countries. Unlike in 1918 and largely because of the strength of the Christian Democratic parties, there was no appetite for further measures of disestablishment. Instead, in Western Europe churches tended to be restored to their former places of honour and privilege. In Germany and Italy the interwar concordats remained in force while in Franco's Spain, a new concordat in 1953 reinforced the system of National Catholicism. In Eastern Europe the end of the world war produced radically different outcomes as Soviet-installed regimes introduced strict controls on the churches and other religious bodies and the state atheism which had been pioneered in Russia after the Bolshevik takeover in 1917 was imposed – thus, in Poland, for example, the government abrogated the concordat. This occurred more often than not in the context of constitutional provisions which ostensibly guaranteed religious freedom in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and other international legal instruments (Boyle and Sheen 1997). By 1970 however, as Table 12.1 indicates, all 22 countries of Central and Eastern Europe which lay behind the Iron Curtain could be designated Atheistic *de jure*, committed in Barrett's terms to 'formally promoting irreligion'. This meant typically that while the state was ostensibly separated from all religions and churches, it was also 'linked for ideological reasons with irreligion and opposed on principle to all religion', claiming the right 'to oppose religion by discrimination, obstruction or even suppression' (Barrett 1982: 96). Separation in these states meant exclusion from public life and the cutting-off of most of the resources required for religion to flourish;

it emphatically did not mean that the state was debarred from interfering in the field of religious provision – rather that, as in Turkey, the state and its organs should exert maximum control and surveillance. In the extreme case of Albania, finally, the attempt was openly made from 1967 to 1991 to abolish religion altogether.

In very different ways the decades after 1945 can be seen then as a time when the connections between, and mutual involvement of, religion and the state was actually reinforced in both Western and Eastern Europe.

Thirty years on however, Europe's third wave of democratization began with the April 1974 military overthrow of Portugal's authoritarian regime and the transition to democracy which followed shortly afterward upon the death of Franco in neighbouring Spain. This wave spread to Latin America and parts of Asia before washing back across Eastern Europe in the late 1980s, finally putting an end to the communist or state socialist regimes. Churches and religious groups were in some of these countries, for example and most notably in Poland, of considerable significance in the campaigns for liberalisation and democratisation which – along with the withdrawal of Soviet guarantees – precipitated the shift to more open democratic regimes. As Table 12.1 indicates, by 2000 all the states which were coded as Atheistic in 1970 had either returned to the category of *de jure* Religious states providing support to the locally dominant religious tradition (15 cases) or had opted to be *de jure* Secular (7 cases: Russia, the three Baltic states, Hungary, Slovakia and Macedonia), that is, officially promoting neither religion nor irreligion.

It is remarkable how little Europe's confessional geography has changed despite the turbulence and violence of the twentieth century. Column IV of Table 12.1 illustrates how the division of Europe along confessional lines which was inherited from the

Latin-Orthodox schism and, in Western Europe, from the period of Reformation and Wars of Religion, was still evident in the proportion of countries' populations which retained confessional or denominational identities. Of the 45 countries listed, fully 38 (84%) continued in 2000 to exhibit single-confession absolute majorities, 33 (72%) had super-majorities (that is, populations where more than two-thirds shared a single confessional identity), while in 12 countries (27%), more than 90% of people shared a single religious identity. However crude, these figures can be taken to demonstrate that the early-modern confessional state continues to throw a long shadow across contemporary Europe.

In 1999 canon lawyer Silvio Ferrari presented the thesis that despite surface, legalistic differences there actually existed a common model of relationship between the state and religious faiths in Western Europe. He argued that the conventional focus on 'outmoded' typologies of church-state relations, which stressed, for example, the differences between separatist, concordat-based and national (or state-church) systems, obscured the existence of real commonalities at the level of 'legal substance'. The model was characterized first by a common commitment to the recognition of individuals' rights to religious liberty. Anomalies in this area – such as the continuing constitutional ban in Greece on proselytism – were gradually being eliminated, although novel problems in connection with the toleration of unconventional 'cults' such as the Church of Scientology or the Moonies continued to pose a challenge. What distinguished Ferrari's common European model, however, was its deliberate privileging of religion:

A religious sub-sector is singled out within the public sector. This may be understood as a 'playing field' or 'protected area'. Inside it the various

collective religious subjects (churches, denominations, and religious communities) are free to act in conditions of substantial advantage compared to those collective subjects that are not religious.

(Ferrari 1999: 3)

One question-begging feature of Ferrari's model centres on what he saw as the essentially secular nature of the modern state: 'the fundamental principles of the common European model of relationships between the state and the religious communities ... are quite rigid. ... [They] have been summed up in the formula "the secular state"' (Ferrari 1999: 11). A glance at the data presented in Table 12.1 suggests, however, that what distinguishes the European model is not so much state secularity as state religiosity, particularly when contrasted with the separationist model in the USA (Krislov 1985). This is a point that emerges even more clearly from the analysis of Jonathan Fox's large worldwide data collection mapping church–state connectedness (Fox and Sandler 2005; Fox 2006). If the secularity of the state is to be seen as a fundamental principle of the European model, then, it is surely one more honoured in the breach than the observance (Barro and McCleary 2005).

The record in Eastern Europe is instructive. None of the eight former Communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe that joined the EU in May 2004 (in alphabetic order: the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) formally adopted a state–church model after the end of the Cold War; nor, on the other hand, did any of them adopt a rigid separation model either despite the claim of some that it constitutes a *sine qua non* of liberal democracy. Most instead chose 'benevolent separation' or 'cooperation' models and all, including those that did not have significant Catholic populations, negotiated

some kind of concordat settlement with the Vatican. This is all the more remarkable since of the 15 previous EU members only 5 (Austria, Germany, Italy, Portugal and Spain) had existing concordats. In Germany the fall of the Wall in 1989 also led to a new wave of church–state treaties, as the Eastern *Länder* were again opened for free religious activity.

### **Beyond Europe: contemporary religion–state relations in the rest of the world**

In the red dawn of the third millennium of the Common Era it is a nice irony that debates about secularization continue unabated; the rising trend line of controversy itself would seem to mock the very idea that religion is declining in political significance. As in the case of Europe, indications reflecting the mutual entanglements of states and religion across the world point Janus-like in both directions: while the parliament of Tuvalu in 1991 approved legislation establishing the [Congregationalist] Church of Tuvalu as the state church, at the end of 2007 Nepal's provisional parliamentary assembly voted to abolish the monarchy whose kings were held to be reincarnations of the Hindu god Vishnu. With the development of the Fox (2006) dataset measures for the different components of state–religion relations between 1990 and 2002, it is now possible to review the contemporary situation using empirical indicators for all states of one million or more inhabitants.

As was noted above in the case of Europe, secularizing trends, have failed to make for anything like a clear separation between state and religion, even in those countries where critical political changes had for much of the previous century placed anti-religious elites in power. As Table 12.2 indicates, the hostile pattern of state–religion juxtaposition had in fact by

2002 become a rarity across the whole globe. The number of remaining cases of regimes judged by Fox (2006) to be either 'hostile' or 'inadvertently insensitive' to religion had reduced to only five; these were respectively Vietnam and Cuba, and China, North Korea and Laos. An equally remarkable finding is the failure of separationism to have made significant headway: only nine states in 2002 could be counted as having separationist regimes – in Europe, only France and Azerbaijan, and, in the Americas, only Mexico and Uruguay.<sup>1</sup> Fully 92% of all cases (161 out of 175 countries) were coded as having state–religion regulatory regimes which ranged from full religious establishment to 'accommodationism' (understood as involving a posture of benevolent neutrality towards religion).<sup>2</sup>

The largest single category, accounting for over a quarter of all countries, is the one which most positively favours not just religion in general but a particular religion – or, as in the anomalous cases of the United Kingdom and Finland, two particular religions: this is the category of countries which still maintained systems of Established Religion(s). As Table 12.2 indicates, this pattern is to be found in all confessional traditions, although it is most common in those countries where Islam has been historically dominant, where it

accounts for almost 60% of all cases. In traditionally Catholic countries the most common state–religion regulatory regime is that of Endorsed Religion where there is an official acknowledgement that Roman Catholicism has a special place in the country's traditions, as for example in the cases of Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Poland and Croatia. Finally, among the countries where 'Other Christian' – mainly Protestant and Orthodox – confessional traditions have been historically dominant, Accommodationist regimes are found to be most common.

While Table 12.2 provides a summary overview of state–religion relations in terms of alternative models it cannot show the range of variation in scope and intensity of the regulatory relationships which are to be found within and across the individual categories (Fox 2006: 538). For example, cases of the Established Religion(s) model are found in Catholic Malta, Protestant United Kingdom and Muslim Saudi Arabia, yet even without quantitative measures to demonstrate the fact it is evident that the 'weight' of religious establishment, as it is expressed in regulatory arrangements affecting the established religion itself and other religions, varies widely between these three cases. Similarly the fact that both France and Azerbaijan are coded as cases of separationist regimes obscures vast

**Table 12.2** State–religion regimes in 2002, by historically dominant confession

	<i>Catholic</i>	<i>Other Christian</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Totals</i>
Established religion(s)	7 (16.3%)	6 (14.1%)	27 (57.4%)	4 (12.5%)	46 (26.2%)
Endorsed religion(s)	18 (41.9%)	10 (18.9%)	6 (12.8%)	2 (6.3%)	36 (20.6%)
Cooperationist	9 (20.9%)	14 (26.4%)	5 (10.6%)	10 (31.3%)	38 (21.7%)
Accommodationist	6 (14.0%)	20 (37.7%)	5 (10.6%)	10 (31.3%)	41 (23.4%)
Separationist	3 (7.0%)	1 (1.9%)	4 (8.5%)	1 (3.1%)	9 (5.1%)
Insensitive/hostile	0	0	0	5 (15.6%)	5 (2.9%)
Total	43 (100%)	53 (100%)	47 (99.9%)	32 (100.1%)	175

Notes: I have chosen to adapt Cole Durham's (1996) original labelling for this table, shortening his coding by combining the Cooperationist (T = 35) and Supportive (T = 3) and the Inadvertent Insensitivity (T = 4) and Hostile (T = 1) categories. The source of the data is Fox (2006).

differences in their internal arrangements. Fox's government involvement in religion (GIR) index, however, provides a useful summary indication of these variations.<sup>3</sup>

Table 12.3 shows the banded scores for GIR in 2002 across all 175 countries arranged by world region. In many respects the picture which emerges is unsurprising. The fact that the mean GIR score for the countries of the Middle East and North Africa, which are overwhelmingly Muslim (the exceptions being Israel

and Lebanon) is much the highest (over 50) is consistent with the finding in Table 12.2 that a large majority of countries where Islam has been historically dominant have systems of religious establishment. Equally, the fact that Saudi Arabia (78) and Iran (67) score first and second in this measure of governmental regulatory weight in the sphere of religion accords with what is widely known about their theocratic or hierocratic systems of government given their treatment of certain

**Table 12.3** Government involvement in religion scores in 2002, by region

<i>GIR score deciles</i>	<i>Western democracies</i>	<i>Former Soviet bloc</i>	<i>Asia</i>	<i>M. East and N. Africa</i>	<i>Sub-Saharan Africa</i>	<i>Latin America</i>	<i>Totals</i>
0.00>9.99	USA Netherlands Australia Canada	Estonia Albania	Taiwan S. Korea Mongolia Solomon Is. Philippines Japan		Congo-B. Lesotho Namibia Benin Angola Burkina-F. Burundi, Gambia S. Africa Zaire Swaziland Liberia Senegal Malawi Mozambique Ghana Botswana Rwanda	Guyana Ecuador Bahamas Brazil Barbados Trinidad & Tobago Suriname Uruguay	38 (21.7%)
10.00>19.99	Luxembourg New Zealand Sweden Italy Ireland Gk Cyprus Tk. Cyprus Germany	Tajikistan Slovenia Bosnia-H. Yugoslavia Latvia Lithuania Czech Rep. Kyrgyzstan Slovakia Ukraine	Fiji Papua NG Vanuatu		Mauritius Guinea-B. Sierra L. Gabon Cape Verde Togo Cameroon Mali Zimbabwe Tanzania Central Af. Rep. Madagascar Niger Uganda Ivory Coast	Mexico Jamaica Guatemala Nicaragua Colombia	41 (23.4%)

*Continued*



**Table 12.3** Continued

<i>GIR score deciles</i>	<i>Western democracies</i>	<i>Former Soviet bloc</i>	<i>Asia</i>	<i>M. East and N. Africa</i>	<i>Sub-Saharan Africa</i>	<i>Latin America</i>	<i>Totals</i>
20.00>29.99	Switzerland Portugal France Andorra Austria Belgium Malta Norway Denmark Liechtenstein UK, Spain Iceland	Poland Croatia Hungary Romania Macedonia	Thailand India Nepal Cambodia Singapore	Lebanon	Ethiopia Guinea Nigeria Chad Equat. Guinea Kenya Eritrea Zambia	Belize Chile Paraguay Honduras Haiti Peru Venezuela El Salvador Panama Domin. Rep.	42 (24.0%)
30.00>39.99	Finland Greece	Russia Azerbaijan Kazakhstan Moldova Georgia Belarus Bulgaria Turkmenistan	Sri Lanka Bangladesh Laos	Israel Bahrain	Djibouti Somalia	Argentina Costa Rica Bolivia	20 (11.4%)
40.00>49.99		Armenia Uzbekistan	N. Korea Bhutan Indonesia Burma China Afghanistan	Syria Oman Kuwait Turkey Libya Yemen W. Sahara	Comoros Mauritania	Cuba	18 (10.3%)
50.00>59.99			Pakistan Brunei Vietnam Malaysia	Morocco Qatar Algeria Iraq Tunisia UAE	Sudan		11 (6.3%)
60.00>69.99			Maldives	Jordan Egypt Iran Saudi Arabia			4 (2.4%)
70.00>79.99							1 (0.6%)
Mean scores	19.17	24.24	30.71	50.82	15.82	17.88	175 (100.1%)

Source: The source of this data is the RAS (Religion and State) dataset developed by Jonathan Fox. A full description is available in J. Fox, *A World Survey of Religion and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) and from the Religion and State project website: <http://www.biu.ac.il/soc/po/ras/>

religious minorities, their patterns of regulation of the majority religion, and their privileging of religious legislation. Israel's GIR score (37) which is by contrast low for the Middle East/North Africa region is shown also to be relatively high in a world context. The overall GIR score for the Western liberal democracies with a mean well under half that of the Middle East/North Africa is considerably lower. Here the interesting point to note is, however, that when all the elements of governmental involvement in the sphere of religion are taken into account only four out of 27 score under 10 and only the USA scores zero, reflecting its history until recently of strict separationism. Interestingly, the median case is Portugal (22), where as Table 12.1 indicated 97% of the population are, formally at least, Roman Catholic and Catholicism has been the established religion throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century.

This brief statistical survey of state-religion institutional arrangements can take little account of the turbulent struggles which have revolved, and in many parts of the world continue to revolve, around them and been involved in constructing them. Thus, Islamists following the line marked out by radicals including the Egyptian Sayyid Qutb (1906-66) and the Pakistani Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi (1903-79) regard many of the political regimes, which incorporate forms of Islamic religious establishment in, say, Egypt or Algeria or Saudi Arabia, as corrupt, in practice anti-Islamic and worthy only of violent overthrow. And contemporary Islamists' sometimes-violent campaigns against such regimes and those in the West who are seen to support them, such as the USA and Britain, have tipped much of the world into the turmoil of the so-called War on Terror. In those countries where Islamists have, for a time at least gained power – Iran, Afghanistan and Sudan, for example – and attempted to

craft fully Islamic polities with the state under the authority of religious officials, the resulting struggles have been no less turbulent, while in others where the contest between rival factions remains undecided – Somalia, Iraq and Pakistan, for example – the threat or reality of state failure with the complete breakdown of the state's ability to rule is present. While the world of Islam presents the most dramatic attempts by religious forces to assert their precedence in the exercise of state powers it is not alone. In India and Sri Lanka, for example, Hindu, Sikh and Buddhist fundamentalists also struggle to reorder on religious lines the political arrangements set in place at the time of independence.

## Conclusion

Located in a world context, the situation in Europe is increasingly seen as exceptional. In spite of – or, perhaps, because of – the maintenance there of important state-religion linkages, the secularity of European societies and cultures has seemed to resist the sacralizing trends evident elsewhere. Even in the USA such trends are evident, although in one manifestation they can be seen as pressing for changes which would bring state-religion relationships closer to those obtaining in Europe (Monsma and Soper 1997). Europe is far from immune to the trends, however (Byrnes and Katzenstein 2006). Nor is it clear that the European state-religion model of benevolent neutrality will prove sufficiently robust to accommodate and so 'domesticate' the more difficult challenges that face it (Madeley 2006a, 2006b). Olivier Roy has argued that 'neo-fundamentalist' Islam, which, he avers, increasingly appeals to Europe's rootless and materially disadvantaged Muslim youth, is associated in one of its forms with support for the militancy of extreme groups such as Al-Qaeda. Even in less

threatening variants, which typically seek reassertion of strict or 'pure' Islamic values within the minority communities, deterritorialized Islam can be seen as embracing multiculturalism – principally as a means of resisting, rather than easing, integration into the European host societies (Roy 2002: 1). Both cases, however, would appear to represent a radical integralist challenge to both state and society in Europe, and place a large question mark over secularization as differentiation. The violent events of 2004 in the Netherlands, including the murder of the film director, Theo van Gogh, by an avowed Islamist, stand as a cautionary tale from modern Europe's first largely secular state and the site of many of its most progressive social experiments: 'What happened in this small corner of northwestern Europe could happen anywhere, as long as young men and women feel that death is their only way home' (Buruma 2006: 262).

## Notes

- 1 The others so identified were Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Niger, Eritrea and Singapore.
- 2 It is particularly noteworthy in this context that the USA, the world's first state to introduce church–state separation, was judged to have ceased to count as separationist and ranks instead as accommodationist. In line with the Fox finding, Cole Durham points out that many scholars, McConnell for example, argue that the USA is now to be regarded as accommodationist rather than separationist not least because '[a]s state influence becomes more pervasive and regulatory burdens expand, refusal to exempt or accommodate shades into hostility' (Cole Durham 1996: 2).
- 3 The index scores represent an overall measure of GIR obtained by combining six narrower-gauge measures for: (1) state support for one or more religions either officially or in practice; (2) state hostility toward religion; (3) comparative government treatment of different religions, including both benefits and restrictions; (4) government restrictions on the practice of religion by religious minorities; (5) government regulation of the

majority religion; and (6) legislation of religious laws. The figures given are simply summations of the number of positive instances of GIR.

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## Does God matter, and if so whose God?

### Religion and democratisation<sup>1</sup>

*John Anderson*

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The question of how, or if, religious traditions might affect the possibility of successful democratisation has been hotly debated for several decades. During the immediate post-war years many writers stressed the importance of political culture in explaining the success or otherwise of democratisation and some focused on the ways in which religious traditions fed into the making of any country's political culture. More recently a 'new orthodoxy' has emerged which concentrates on institutional or economic factors in the making of democracy and tends to see the impact of cultural factors as marginal or irrelevant. Few authors analysing the 'third wave' give much space to religion, except in discussing countries such as Poland where institutional religion played a role in undermining authoritarian regimes. Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, analysing the East European experience, suggest that religion is a hypothesis that one can do without because other factors are sufficient to explain the differential results of democratisation in the region (Linz and Stepan 1996: 452–453). In similar vein Fred Halliday argues that the barriers to democracy in Islamic countries have to do with 'certain other social and political

features that their societies share. ... Though some of these features tend to be legitimised in terms of Islamic doctrine, there is nothing specifically "Islamic" about them' (Halliday 1996: 116). By way of contrast Samuel Huntington has seen religion as crucial in defining the civilisational blocs into which he claims the world is divided and has argued that religious tradition does have an impact upon the likely success of democratisation efforts (Huntington 1991, 1996).

This chapter offers a brief review of the key debates and points to the main arguments of the new orthodoxy which stress: the impossibility of essentialising religious traditions, the multi-vocal nature of all religious discourses which can provide resources for both supporters and opponents of democracy, and the secondary nature of cultural factors in explaining successful or failed democratisation. This chapter accepts many of these arguments but simultaneously argues that religion is not entirely irrelevant to understanding the evolution of democratic experiments. In particular, it suggests that religious traditions do have core elements – just as does democracy, contrary to cultural relativist critiques; that religious traditions may, in Stepan's

words be multi-vocal (Stepan 2001: 252–253), but that at any point in time the dominant voices within them may prove more or less receptive to pluralistic development; and that intertwined religious and cultural traditions as expressed through public discourse and in the positions adopted by key religious actors, though not decisive, may have some marginal impact upon the success or otherwise of democratic consolidation. In other words, the (rather weak) argument is not that religion determines political outcomes, or that religious emphases cannot change, or that the world is divided into inevitably clashing civilisational blocs – though my focus (for reasons of space) on Islam and Eastern Orthodoxy as partially problematic traditions may superficially appear to support such an approach – but simply that religion is not irrelevant to evaluating the prospects for democratisation.

## The debate

### *The Protestant connection*

Many of those writing about the preconditions for democracy in the decades following 1945 noted that the first countries to democratise tended to have a Protestant religious tradition – the USA, Great Britain, Scandinavia, Holland – whilst, as Steve Bruce notes in his contribution to this collection, these were also the countries that avoided the authoritarian embrace during the twentieth century. Of course there were exceptions – intermittently in some Latin American countries and in India after independence – so there was no suggestion that Protestantism was a necessary condition, but the argument was made that there were elements within this religious tradition that were more suited to the emergence of pluralist politics. For some this affinity lay in economic developments within these countries, for others democracy stemmed from

certain ideological features of the Protestant tradition, whilst yet others saw democracy as a largely ‘accidental’ by-product of certain aspects of the Reformation process.

Those who focused on the economic connection tended to see democracy as a consequence of economic modernisation and, because the most developed countries tended to be Protestant in tradition, it was perhaps inevitable that democracy should emerge first in these countries. Max Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* had suggested that certain psychological conditions contributed towards the creation of the modern capitalist system, and that these were created in large part by religious change. Here he linked the urge to accumulate to the peculiarly Calvinist notions of ‘calling’ and ‘predestination’ which gave birth to a ‘worldly asceticism’ that encouraged the pursuit of wealth so long as it was not used for worldly pleasure (Weber 1930: chs 4, 5). Needless to say, Weber was far too sophisticated to posit a deterministic relationship, warning that ‘we have no intention of maintaining such a foolish and doctrinaire thesis as that the spirit of capitalism ... could only have arisen as a result of certain effects of the Reformation, or even that capitalism as an economic system is a creation of the Reformation ... we can only proceed by investigating whether and at what points certain correlations between forms of religious beliefs and practical ethics can be worked out’ (Weber 1930: 91). Equally, it should be stressed that he was not at this point making an argument about democracy as such, though some of the implications of his thesis have been extended to suggest a connection between Protestantism and democracy. In particular, it has been argued that the Reformation helped to break down the traditional cultural barriers to economic modernisation which in turn created a growing division of labour and a degree of egalitarianism.

The link to democracy was also seen in the ideological nature of Protestantism with its emphasis on the individual's relationship with God, an idea that was inherently egalitarian in nature. At the heart of Luther's vision was the notion of the priesthood of all believers which, at least in the spiritual sphere, made no distinction between prince or pauper when it came to one's relationship with God. Similarly Calvin's 'calling' was something that could come to any member of a society and on paper his congregational politics could be seen as a prototype of democratic forms of governance. Of course, in practice none of the leading Reformers were democrats in the modern sense of the word. Luther stressed the naturalness of the given social order, relied heavily on princes for the defence of the new teachings, and vigorously denounced the peasants who rose against their masters (for a general survey of Luther's thinking on politics, see Cargill 1984). Equally, Calvinist congregational politics were often heavily dominated by their pastors and Calvin's own experience of struggling with Geneva's notionally representative assembly rendered him sceptical about the conformity of any particular form of government to the divine ideal (Kingdom and Linder 1970; Wuthnow 1989: 126–128).

Nonetheless, there emerged out of Reformation discourse several ideas that were to contribute to the emergence of democracy in the modern sense: the notion of rule as a covenant between rulers and ruled, the acceptability of resistance to rulers under some circumstances, and the idea of tolerance. During the latter half of the sixteenth century various writers explored the question of when it might be acceptable to resist tyranny and who had the right to overthrow evil rulers. By and large, the reformers were conservative but by the end of the century there had begun to emerge an emphasis on rule as the product of a covenant between people

and monarch, an idea perhaps best set out in the Calvinist-inspired *Vindicae contra tyrannos* (1579). Here it was suggested that should the prince flout God's law he would lose divine approval and the mutual obligation implicit in the covenant would be undermined. In such circumstances the community had a right to encourage a change in behaviour and in the last resort to remove an erring leader (Kingdom 1991).

With regard to tolerance, this was not a virtue initially much discussed by the Reformers and religious liberty was often seen in terms of 'freedom in Christ' or freedom from the 'mire of Catholicism' (Benedict 1996: 69–93). In consequence they generally advocated acceptance of their own right to differ from Catholic orthodoxy but were often unable to accept difference within communities and states that they ruled. Yet perhaps inevitably the religious fragmentation that followed on from the Reformation helped to undermine the notion of a single-faith community dominating the political order. This was certainly not the intent of the Protestant reformers but, in Steve Bruce's words, an inadvertent by-product of the social and theological changes they initiated. In particular, rising prosperity attendant upon economic modernisation, the changing relationship between the individual and the community, and the rise of religious diversity helped to break the organic connection of religion and community and to push religion into the private sphere. With increasing religious diversity, enforcing orthodoxy became more expensive for emerging nation states and in consequence they organised their activities with decreasing reference to religious institutions or ideas (Bruce 2003: 144–254). Thus the acceptance of religious diversity which gradually emerged following the Reformation contributed to a wider acceptance of diversity and the need for consent in constructing the political order, which was later institutionalised in liberal-democratic forms.

## 'Undemocratic' religions

If Protestantism was seen as a key contributor to the emergence of democratic orders or at the very least a particularly 'suitable' religion for democracy, nearly all other religious traditions tended to be viewed as in some sense incompatible with pluralist politics. Initially, much of the discussion focused on Roman Catholicism which historically had been deeply hostile to democratic ideals and which, during the first half of the twentieth century, seemed to find it easy to live with authoritarian political systems. The fact that democracy had largely emerged within the Protestant world meant that for some time the Roman Catholic Church did not have to engage directly with democratic forms of rule. The excesses of the French Revolution, ostensibly committed to giving citizens the right of political participation, reinforced the Church's view that democracy was in some sense associated with chaos, anarchy and hostility towards true religion. Moreover, the very notion of popular sovereignty appeared to contradict the sovereignty of God, whilst genuine tolerance was viewed as threatening to the Church's ideological hegemony. In consequence, Gregory XVI was quick to condemn the erroneous concept of 'freedom of conscience' whilst the Syllabus of Errors (1860) rejected the view that the Church should compromise with 'progress, liberalism and modern civilisation' (Sigmund 1987: 530–548). Though Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891) promoted a vision of social Catholicism, the Vatican clung to its rejection of democratic politics till the perceived threat of communism led it to re-think its position. Even then Catholic hierarchies in practice continued to remain ambiguous in their relationships with authoritarian regimes, whether the fascist rulers of Central Europe during the 1930s or the corporatist leaders of Iberia and Latin America

during the post-war years. And, as Sigmund notes, the Vatican's view of all political order as provisional and its willingness to adapt to all regimes so long as they did not directly threaten the Catholic conception of the common good encouraged a tendency to accept the status quo (Sigmund 1987: 531).

It was the experience of the Iberian and Latin American countries from the 1930s through the 1960s that led some scholars to suggest the incompatibility of Catholicism and democratic governance. So long as these regimes protected the institutional interests of the Church, whose bishops often came from the same social groups as the political elite, there was little reason for clergymen to oppose authoritarian rulers. In most cases such regimes provided legal support for Catholic hegemony, promoted Catholic education in education and permitted the censorship of works critical of religious teaching. More importantly, there were key elements within the Catholic organisational and ideological tradition that chimed in well with the authoritarian and paternalistic political traditions of these states. These included its monarchical and hierarchical structure, its emphasis on submission to the authority of the clerical estate, and its intolerance of diversity within predominantly Catholic states. Dealy points out that in North America the founding fathers sought to disperse power, whereas in Latin America the rulers who broke away from Spain and Portugal sought to unify power, and he sees the roots of this monistic vision in the common Catholic culture of the region and springing out of the Catholic notion of the common good, something which is distinct from the sum of many private interests and tends to view the pursuit of particular interests as invariably divisive (Dealy 1992: 40–60). Thus elements within the Catholic tradition reinforced and strengthened Iberian–Latin American predispositions towards hierarchy, paternalism and authoritarianism.



The primary focus of academic discussion in the 1950s and 1960s was the Catholic Church, and the limited attention paid to other religions suggested that few scholars took seriously the possibility that they might prove supportive of democratic development. Many scholars focused on 'Islam' and 'Confucianism' as religions that contained elements within them that sat uneasily with democracy. With regard to Islam it was suggested that reliance on a fixed religious text and quasi-legal ordinances, the emphasis on divine sovereignty, and the supposed lack of distinction between the religious and the political realms, all worked against democratic development. Moreover, in practice democracy had by and large, and with the partial exceptions of Turkey and Pakistan, failed to take root in any predominantly Muslim country in the decades following the war (Vatikiotis 1987; Kedourie 1992). In similar vein several writers argued that the Confucian culture that dominated parts of East Asia, with its emphasis on hierarchy, order and consensus also worked against democracy (on Confucianism, see Pye 1985). Other religions barely rated a mention in these early discussions, the assumption perhaps being that Eastern Orthodoxy with its long tradition of dependence upon the state (Koyziz 1993: 267–289) and Buddhism with its alleged passivity offered few resources to would-be democratisers. More interesting is the relative absence until recently of any significant discussion of Judaism, or of Hinduism whose plurality of divinities and broad tolerance of religious difference in an earlier period might have been seen as underlying India's unlikely adoption of democratic governance post-independence. Conversely it might be noted that the attempt of Hindu nationalists to develop a more coherent 'scriptural' model of Hinduism has been accompanied by a partial rejection of the post-independence pluralist model of political order (Hansen 1999; Batt 2001).

## The thesis revised

The suggestion that certain religious traditions were more suitable for democracy came under increasing attack from the early 1980s onwards with criticism taking two forms. The first argued that in practice the position adopted by political actors in pushing for democratisation was generally decisive and culture largely irrelevant or secondary – if external pressures, political elite activity or bottom-up pressure was such as to encourage or compel authoritarian leaders to stand down then democratisation was more likely to happen. A second approach argued that culturalist theories over-emphasised the role of religion in shaping contemporary political cultures and equally that they had too static a view of religious tradition which made no allowance for resources within religious traditions that might be supportive of democracy.

Nonetheless, several authors continued to focus on the *suitability* of different religions for democratic development, albeit revising the thesis in the process. Perhaps the most notable revision was put forward by Samuel Huntington in his book on democratisation's 'third wave'. Here he argued that changes in five independent variables during the 1960s and 1970s had made possible the new democratic wave, and that these included religious change, most notably within the Catholic Church. Huntington starts by noting the ongoing relationship between democracy and Protestantism, quoting a 1960s study which suggested that, in 91 countries studied, the greater the proportion of Protestants the higher the level of democracy. Moreover, he argued that to some extent this relationship still held, pointing to the experience of South Korea as the one country where Christianity in general and Protestantism in particular had expanded rapidly during the 1960s and 1970s, with Christians making up about 1% of the

population in 1945 and maybe 25% by the mid-1980s. In turn, Christianity created 'a surer doctrinal and institutional basis for opposing political repression' by promoting ideas of equality and respect for authority beyond that of the state (Huntington 1991: 73–74). Later discussions of the rapid expansion of Pentecostal Christianity in Latin America have also revolved around the question of whether this might reinforce a Protestant work ethic that would contribute to economic development and a deepening of democratisation, though Gill's contribution to this collection suggests the need for caution in suggesting a distinctive Protestant contribution to socio-political life (Martin 1990).

Of greater significance, however, was the fact that according to Huntington around three-quarters of the countries undergoing transition prior to 1991 had a predominantly Catholic tradition – this factor appears to have been less significant in the wave of the 1990s. By then most predominantly Protestant countries were already democratic and therefore any new democratisations had to be in countries with another religious tradition, but why Catholic? Though Huntington saw this as in part a product of the fact that these countries had higher rates of economic growth than traditionally Protestant countries, he also suggested that changes within the Catholic Church itself were of crucial importance. Prior to the 1960s the Church and its national hierarchies generally proved supportive of authoritarian orders but from that time onwards the institution as a whole became increasingly critical of such regimes. At the global level this stemmed from the changes in Catholic social teaching and theological 'style' emanating from the Second Vatican Council held in the early 1960s which led the Church to defend human rights and promote democracy. At the local level a new generation of priests, often with European education but also with more experience

of working amongst the marginalised within their own societies, came to see their role in terms of defending the interests of their flock against the economically and politically powerful. All this was reinforced in the late 1970s by the election of John Paul II who, though sceptical about the radicalisation of the clergy, remained committed to the defence of the dignity of the individual and supported those national hierarchies who promoted human rights or got involved in mediating between regimes and political opposition. All this not only changed the position of a key institutional actor but also had an impact upon regional politics by promoting a more participatory and less hierarchical vision of the political order (Martin 1990). Hence the thesis of religious influence was effectively modified with Huntington suggesting that it was not Protestantism that was crucial in the present period but Western Christianity more generally – or even maybe any religious tradition so long as it became 'Protestantised' by reducing hierarchical elements and focusing more on the individual. Others have been more sceptical of this argument with Jeff Haynes, for example, suggesting that in Africa senior religious leaders jumping on the democratic bandwagon to preserve their own ideological hegemony within society (Haynes 1996: 104–133).

Much of the voluminous literature on religion in Latin America tended to support the view that the Catholic Church had by and large shifted its position in favour of a more pluralistic vision of the ideal polity, though rational-choice analysts such as Anthony Gill thought this had more to do with responses to ideological and organisational competition – primarily from expanding Protestant communities – than ideological shifts within the Catholic Church (see, for example, Sigmund 1994; Kleiber 1998; Gill 1998). Linz and Stepan, who generally reject explanations rooted in religion, argue that

the Catholic Church's ability to promote pluralism in authoritarian and especially totalitarian countries comes from

its transnational base. The papacy can be a source of spiritual and material support for groups that want to resist monist absorption or extinction. ... This source of higher international power is not available in a political system (such as Bulgaria, Romania or the former Soviet Union) which has Orthodox churches that are national but not transnational in scope and that historically have accepted a form of 'caesaropapism'. ... It is also not available in a predominantly Islamic society because Islam as a religion is a community of believers in which all believers can be preachers and where there is no transnational hierarchy.

(Linz and Stepan 1996: 260–261)

In his 1991 book Huntington appeared to accept that cultural constraints on democracy were not fixed for ever and that just as Catholicism changed so might other religious traditions that help to shape regional political cultures. Yet in the later *Clash of Civilisations* (1996) he appears to take a much stronger view which sees Islam in particular as providing infertile ground for the development of democratic institutions, especially in a global context where democracy is associated with Western dominance. And in analysing post-communist Europe he argued that:

The most significant dividing line in Europe, as William Wallace has suggested may well be the eastern boundary of Western Christianity in the year 1500. ... The peoples to the north and west of this line are Protestant or Catholic; they shared the common experiences of European history – feudalism, the Renaissance,

the Reformation, the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution: they are generally economically better off than the peoples to the east; and they may now look forward to increasing involvement in a common European economy and to the consolidation of democratic political systems. The peoples to the east and south of this line are Orthodox and Muslim: they historically belonged to the Ottoman or Tsarist empires and were only lightly touched by the shaping events in the rest of Europe; they are generally less advanced economically; they seem much less likely to develop stable democratic political systems.

(Huntington 1996: 105)

In somewhat less deterministic fashion Inglehart has posited the existence of cultural zones that have been shaped in part by religious differences. In his view this has less to do with present religious affiliations than with the legacy of the past which means, for example, that even in countries such as the Netherlands or Germany which now have as many Catholics as Protestants value systems tend to be 'typically Protestant' (Inglehart and Carballo 2000: 341). Consequently, though religious tradition does not determine democratic outcomes, these authors restated the argument that belief systems may create a value and even structural bias that can work for or against successful democracy building at the present moment in time.

## The thesis challenged

By the late 1980s and early 1990s approaches which sought to explain political transition in terms of political culture and religious tradition were coming under sustained attack. 'Transitologists' increasingly

questioned the 'pre-conditions' approach which suggested that democracy could only be constructed where the conditions were 'right' and argued that in principle democratisation could take place in varying circumstances. The experiences of the 'third wave' – and some would say 'fourth wave' – pointed to the possibility of creating democratic governance in virtually every corner of the globe, though the Muslim countries of the Middle East and Central Asia appeared to be lagging behind, and in a variety of cultural settings. This led a succession of scholars to emphasise the importance of agency. In consequence the focus of study was less on cultural and economic pre-conditions than on the choices made by key social and political actors. There was, however, an awareness of the need to separate out the causes of democracy – why it emerges – from what makes it flourish, a distinction I will suggest later creates an opportunity to bring religion back into consideration (see, for example, Potter 1997).

Leaving aside the actor focus, much criticism was levelled at the way in which religion had been used in explaining political development. For Beetham, the trouble with all such 'negative' hypotheses about religion and democratisation is that they treated 'religions as monolithic, when their core doctrines are typically subject to a variety of schools of interpretation; and as immutable, when they are notoriously revisionist in the face of changing circumstances and political currents' (Potter 1997: 29). In a wide-ranging essay published in 2001 Alfred Stepan suggested that all religious traditions were multi-vocal, containing organisational and intellectual resources that could be called upon in support of democratic forms of governance. Thus, whilst Singapore's leaders might utilise 'Asian values' in defence of authoritarianism, Kim Dae Jung in South Korea could appeal to those same values in seeking to promote democratisation.

At the same time he noted that even political orientations that have sometimes been seen to work against democratisation can, on occasion, work the other way, as in the case of the Greek Orthodox Church whose tradition of subservience to the political authorities led it to become supportive of democracy once the political elite opted for pluralism (Stepan 2001) – though as we shall note later the attitude of that Church towards genuine pluralism is, on occasion, rather ambiguous even today.

Much of the discussion, however, has focused on Islam in response to the observation that the Muslim-dominated regions of the world have proved particularly resistant to democratisation. Whereas authors such as Huntington and Francis Fukuyama have stirred up considerable public debate with their tendency to see the religious and civilisational aspects of Islam as barriers to the inauguration and development of democracy, many scholars of the Middle East remain sceptical about the role of Islam (Huntington 1996; Fukuyama 1992: 44–45). For Fred Halliday,

to be drawn into an argument about any necessary incompatibility, or for that matter compatibility, between Islam and democracy, is to accept precisely the false premise that there is one true, traditionally established 'Islamic' answer to the question, and that this timeless 'Islam' rules social and political practice. There is no such answer and no such 'Islam'. ... If there are in a range of Islamic countries evident barriers to democracy, this has to do with certain other social and political features that their societies share. ... Though some of these features tend to be legitimised in terms of Islamic doctrine, there is nothing specifically 'Islamic' about them.

(Halliday 1996: 16)

Ray Hinnebusch (2000) takes a similar view in arguing that developments in political economy provide much better explanations for the failures of democratisation in the Middle East than appeals to cultural exceptionalism.

For many writers, there is no such thing as a single Islamic political tradition (Filali-Ansary 1999), and they suggest that within the varying Islamic traditions there were ample intellectual resources for those seeking to promote democratic governance. Though Ernest Gellner argued for a 'Muslim exceptionalism' he also recognised that 'by various obvious criteria – universalism, scripturalism, spiritual egalitarianism, the extension of full participation in the sacred community, not to one, or some, but to all, and the rational systematisation of social life – Islam is, of the three great Western monotheisms, the one closest to modernity' (quoted in Bromley 1997: 233) and, by implication therefore, the one closest in principle to democracy. Esposito and Voll point out that democracy was a contested term in the West, and it might well be possible to draw on Islamic traditions that were loyal to the core concern of democracy with participation whilst allowing it to take into account the specific concerns of Muslims for recognition of 'special identities or authentic communities' (Esposito and Voll 1996: 17). Like others, they pointed to the concepts of *shura* (consultation), *ijma* (consensus) and *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) as providing some intellectual basis for the development of Muslim democracies (Esposito and Voll 1996: 27–32). That such debates are not confined to the academy is demonstrated by recent political developments in Iran where during the 1990s a number of respected imams have joined leading academics in arguing that the politicisation of religion and its association with authoritarianism have only undermined the spiritual essence of Islam with its emphasis on righteous living by the individual, the promotion of justice by the

state and the right of all to participate in political life (Menashri 2001). One might also note the variety of organisational forms within Islamic societies, some of which have allowed for degrees of popular consultation, or point out that up to 40% of the world's Muslims do in fact live in countries that are more or less democratic – often as minorities – and that this might well encourage a more positive view of the democratic model (Stepan 2001: 236–237).

This more critical approach had almost become a new orthodoxy by the late 1990s. For Bromley, 'the very idea that religious belief can operate as an insuperable obstacle to a particular kind of politics, democracy, has been challenged on the grounds that all religions require interpretation to give them meaning in specific contexts. In this sense religious belief is socially and politically contingent, it does not and cannot determine or prescribe a certain kind of politics' (Bromley 1997: 321–344). In such circumstances, even if a specific religious tradition had historically helped to shape a particular country's political culture, one could not make assumptions about whether this was likely to favour or hinder democratisation. And this argument tied in with the growing assumption of many 'transitologists' that political culture was unhelpful in explaining anything, tended to serve as a 'residual' explanation for developments that institutional analysis or political economy had failed to comprehend. In other words, even if there were problematic elements within religious traditions, which few now accepted given the existence of 'positive' as well as 'negative' elements in each tradition, these were largely irrelevant to the outcomes of democratisation processes.

### **Correlations and explanations: the debate re-opened**

In view of this critique, is there any sense in trying to factor religion into explanations

of democratic outcomes? Clearly, there are problems with the thesis that certain religious traditions in themselves are more or less likely to contribute to transition processes or democracy promotion during the transition phase. Whilst religious groups have contributed to the undermining of authoritarian regimes, there are always counter-examples to be found, as in the support given to Central American dictators by some Protestant groups, or the fact that democratisation took place in Argentina and Chile despite the fact that the Catholic hierarchies in the two countries adopted very different positions with regard to military rulers. Contingent factors often play a key role, as in the Iberian peninsula where a highly conservative and anti-democratic Spanish Church, initially horrified by the outcome of Vatican II, underwent considerable personnel change as a result of the intervention of the papacy and the resident nuncio. In consequence, numerous auxiliary bishops sympathetic to liberalisation were appointed during the 1960s and went on to play a key role in shifting the Church away from its uncritical support for the Franco regime. By way of contrast, the papal nuncio in Portugal sympathised with the traditionalist approach of the hierarchy and the Catholic Church was largely marginalised during the events of the 1970s. There is also a certain mechanistic feel to the argument about any necessary link between religious adherence and democratisation, rather like Adam Przeworski's caricature of the position that universal suffrage was achieved in Western Europe when the proportion of the labour forces outside agriculture reached 50% and that such a social development might have similar consequences elsewhere (Przeworski 1986: 48). The religious corollary of this might be to suggest that the best ways to advance democratisation was via a renewal of the Crusades so as to promote Western Christianity.

Equally problematic are culturalist explanations which focus less on the immediate activities of religious groups than on the overall contribution of religious traditions to political cultures which may reinforce or undermine old authoritarian ways of doing politics. Even those who retain the view that political culture matters have problems isolating the ways in which religion may have contributed to its historical development. Did religion, particularly through the medium of a lettered clerisy, serve to shape the culture and ways of a nation, or was it religion that was shaped by the culture within which it found itself – or, more likely, both? For example, according to the Russian chronicles, Prince Vladimir of Kiev went looking for a religion that suited the character of the people of Rus' – and promptly rejected Islam because Russians like to drink! And even if religion was central to the formation of a country's political culture, to what extent is it relevant today, especially in those countries where religious adherence and participation has declined dramatically?

And yet, whilst it remains impossible to speak of some linear causal relationship between religious tradition and successful democratisation, there remains a nagging doubt that the seeming connection between religious inheritance and the success of democratisation goes beyond simple correlation. That there is a correlation is not in question. Though it is far too early for definitive conclusions, an impressionistic view of the post-communist world, for example, shows that as a general rule those countries with an Orthodox Christian or Islamic tradition have found it harder to consolidate their democratic experiments than those with a Western Christian inheritance. A more substantial analysis might be offered utilising the democracy ratings offered by Freedom House over recent years. Using their 2002 report I have divided countries into a variety of

**Table 13.1** Religions and freedom

<i>Religious tradition (no. of countries)</i>	<i>Freedom House score</i>
Protestant (23)	1.65
Catholic (50)	1.83
Mixed: Prot.–Cath. (12)	1.83
Orthodox (12)	3.25
Hindu (2)	3.25
Mixed: Asian (12)	3.96
Mixed: African (30)	4.12
Buddhist (4)	4.63
Islam (39)	5.39

religious categories – inevitably my assignments will be contestable – assuming a single dominant tradition where over 60% of the population nominally adheres to a single-faith community. Inevitably, some of the categorisations are problematic – for example, in Africa the combinations vary considerably and include Catholicism, Protestantism, Islam and indigenous religious traditions in a variety of mixes – and the results are crude but they produce the results shown in Table 13.1, where the lower the score the freer the country.

Whilst it is difficult to disagree that democracy is strongest in countries of a Western Christian tradition and that it is generally weakest in those of a majority Islamic tradition, the question remains as to whether there is any causal relationship at work. As already noted, most writers have taken the view that:

- all religious traditions are multi-vocal and that would-be democrats and authoritarians can find or interpret elements within the tradition to support their own political preferences. Thus, just as Catholicism has adapted to democracy over recent years so might other traditions in areas of the globe currently under authoritarian rule;
- in any case religion is secondary in explaining democratisation to a host

of other factors. For example, in post-communist Europe the Orthodox and Islamic countries have found transition problematic but they are also the countries in which communism was most secure, where civil society was weakest and economic development lagged behind that of ‘Western Christian’ Central Europe – though equally it might be argued that the reason they ‘lagged’ was because of their cultural traditions;

- that the argument is predicated on a model of democracy created within Western society and built on assumptions about individualism and value-free politics which might be inappropriate in areas of the world where religious worldviews predominate.

The argument here, however, is that:

- democracy in general (as well as Western liberal democracy in particular) does have core meanings and that some religious traditions may have problems reconciling themselves to these;
- religions are indeed multi-vocal but that at any point in time there may be a dominant discourse and practice that renders them more or less supportive of certain patterns of political development;
- though critics are right in arguing that religious tradition is not central or determining, indeed often marginal, religion is not irrelevant to outcomes, and that in the short term what tradition is dominant in a country may – subconsciously or as deliberately fostered by religious and/or secular leaders – help to shape the outcome of democratisation processes.

## Democracy for all occasions

Esposito and Voll (1996) remind us that democracy is a contested concept in the West and that therefore it should in principle be possible for other types of society, in particular Muslim, to come up with participatory schemes that allow for the recognition of 'special identities and authentic communities'. Moreover, in Western systems of liberal democracy there are tensions between the liberal and democratic elements that are reflected in some Muslim writings. Whilst most Muslim thinkers would accept some notion of the rule of law, fewer would be happy about the notion of those laws being created by the will of a majority in a democratically elected legislature. Or if permitted there would be, as remains the case in contemporary Iran, some provision for the religious elite to over-rule the legislature by retaining control over candidacies or the effective right to veto undesirable legislation – though arguably the US Supreme Court does the same thing with reference to America's own foundational documents.

So, of course, the Western model is not the only possible line of development for forms of democratic governance. Nonetheless, democracy does have some core meanings and a dangerous conceptual stretch may creep in, allowing virtually any political order to be described as in some sense democratic. All understandings of democracy have at their heart notions of participation, competition, consent and the protection of individual and minority rights. How these are organised or structured may not matter but that they are present in some form does. In all existing democracies this raises dilemmas, but it may create far more in some cultural and religious contexts than others. Hence it may be possible to find structural forms that recognise communal identities, but if

these are accompanied by restrictions on the rights of other communities or groups or individuals it is not clear that this is compatible with a meaningful evolution of democracy in the long term. And if those with a direct line to the divine, which in principle should be all believers in traditional Protestantism and Islam but in practice is often limited to a clerical (often male) elite, claim the right to 'trump' democratic decision-making then we have a problem. This is a discussion for another context, but clearly whilst the possibility of an Islamic model of democracy should not be ruled out, it becomes meaningless, as in Soviet-style 'socialist democracy', if its practice blatantly contradicts the core elements of liberal democracy in denying participation or rights to sections of the population.

## The limits of religious multi-vocality

Many authors have stressed that all religious belief systems contain within them resources that can be used to promote different visions of the most appropriate political order, with Bromley noting that all religions require interpretation 'to give them meaning in specific contexts' (Bromley 1997: 333). In Stepan's words all religious traditions are multi-vocal and contain intellectual and organisational resources that might be used to promote political pluralism. Though correct, such arguments tend to focus on 'theological' debates or rely on interviews on religious leaders out of power and as such offer only a partial aid. In the political 'real' world one has to deal with 'actually existing' systems and ideological tendencies, not the interpretations of a handful of 'liberally' inclined intellectuals. During the Cold War there were those who argued that Marxism had never been tried properly,



which may or may not have been true, but the bottom line was that virtually all of the functioning 'Marxist' systems had ended in authoritarianism of one form or another. What was important was not whether these were false applications of the theory, but the fact that these were the type of political orders that had actually emerged in these societies. In just the same way we have first to deal with 'actually existing' Protestantism, Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Islam, Judaism, Confucianism etc. As Halliday points out in the case of Islam, there is no monolithic system that one can isolate but, as Bruce has countered, there are surely core elements that help to differentiate one religious tradition from another (Bruce 2003: 216–218). In consequence – and without denying the possibility of major changes, as happened within Catholicism during the post-war years – we have to look less at what might be than at what in practice are the dominant themes or arguments within a religious tradition at any particular time and how these might impact upon the political order. For reasons of space our focus here will be on Eastern Orthodoxy and Islam.

We have already suggested that in the post-communist world democratic governance has struggled to take root in those countries with an Orthodox tradition, and several writers have argued that there are elements within the Orthodox tradition that sit uneasily with democratic politics, and that have thus prevented Orthodox Churches from making a significant contribution to democratisation. With a theology geared more towards liturgy than social practice, and towards heaven rather than earth, the Orthodox Church has tended intellectually (if not always in practice) to treat the social order with a degree of disdain – the troubles of this time are as nothing when compared to the centuries in which the Church thinks. Consequently, Orthodox churches have been able to adapt to a variety of political

regimes, from the Ottoman Empire of the past to the communist regimes of the twentieth century.

In the Russian case the Orthodox Church on the eve of the revolution still lacked many of the 'potentialities' enjoyed by the Western churches. Social theology was weakly developed and, as Richard Sakwa has pointed out, the core notion of 'sobornost', with its implicit rejection of the distinction between separate spheres of state and society – an absence that some would argue is also found in much Muslim social thought – worked against the creation of a liberal-democratic ideology (Sakwa 1994). The Church also lacked the wide array of clerical and lay institutions and associations that underlay the creation of Christian social movements in Western Europe at the end of the nineteenth century. In 1917, as today, the Russian Orthodox Church had a mass nominal following, but was largely cut off from the broad current of social change and found it hard to mobilise would-be adherents. And then, as later, the Church's reputation had been weakened by past compromises with the state order. During the communist period the Church was forced by circumstances to fall back on liturgical celebration and the struggle for survival in the face of a hostile regime. Despite some involvement with the ecumenical movement, the East European Orthodox churches had limited opportunities to develop a social theology and there was no equivalent of Vatican II to galvanise the church into rethinking its relationship with the world in the modern era. The 1918 Church Council (Sobor) might have served that purpose but this possibility was removed by the Bolshevik revolution. Thus the religious component of Russian and Balkan political culture experienced little change, and was perhaps reinforced by the hierarchic, authoritarian and collectivist nature of communist rule which in turn developed quasi-religious rituals for its own mobilising

and legitimising ends. At the same time, Soviet rule destroyed the last opportunities for religious influence over political development and created an extremely defensive church. The institution that survived through 1991 in many ways remained rooted in the past, hierarchical and paternalistic, and suspicious of diversity (Anderson 1994). This is not to deny the difficulties that the church faced or the presence of reformist trends within the institution, but to note that the dominant voices within the Orthodox churches of Russia and the Balkans remained wary of the new order being created and its consequences for themselves. This stemmed in large part from an ideological suspicion and critique of the consequences of pluralism and liberalism which were seen as in some sense undermining Orthodoxy's very 'way of being' (Witte and Bourdeaux 1999: 19–20).

Such reactions were not confined to the post-communist Eastern churches, for in Greece religious identity questions again sprang to life at the turn of the century. Despite Stepan's comments about the adaptation of the Greek Orthodox to democracy (Stepan 2001: 247–250), the reaction of leading hierarchs and church organisations to issues of religious liberty, the removal of the religious question from Greek identity cards, and debates over the European Union during the 1990s and beyond (Anderson 2003), indicate that the Church remains defensive and wary of some of the consequences of democratic politics. What all this suggests is that whilst Orthodoxy social teaching does not preclude or oppose democratisation, there are elements within its actual outworkings at the present moment – focusing on the unity of society, the necessary link between faith and nation, distrust of difference – that are not always helpful for democratic development.

In many respects similar things can be said about the role of Islam in societies where it remains the sole or dominant

religious tradition. As noted earlier, many scholars have argued that there is no single, monolithic or essentialist Islam to which one can refer and that Islamic teachings contain resources that could be used to promote pluralistic politics. Islam has all too often been coopted by authoritarian leaders for their own ends – and Ayubi points out that, historically, Muslim regimes were built on the remnants of the authoritarian empires they conquered and that this inheritance, rather than Islam, accounts for the type of political orders that emerged in much of the Middle East (Ayubi 1991: 32). At the same time, pluralism of a sort has emerged in a number of predominantly Muslim states – most notably Turkey, Indonesia and, to some extent, in Iran. Quite rightly such authors point to various red-herrings utilised to promote the view of Islam as inherently anti-democratic, notably the idea that Islam has no tradition of the separation of the religious and the political sphere which tends to underlie contemporary democratic orders. Nonetheless, it might still be argued that there remain elements within 'actually existing Islam' – within the tradition as presently constituted and realised in the world – that are problematic for democratic development.

At the ideological level there remain features of contemporary Islam that may be unhelpful for processes of democratisation. For Steve Bruce, one fundamental problem lies in the focus on way of life rather than theology, on orthopraxy rather than orthodoxy:

Rule bound religions are *inevitably* more conservative than ones that do not embed divine revelation in a legal code. This follows simply from the fact that rules were written in the past. ... Putting it bluntly ... a society governed by rules written ten centuries ago will be less pleasant than a society that can evolve. ...

The centrality of shariah to Islam does not prevent interpretation but it does restrict it. In contrast Christianity has no choice but to be metaphorical about its teachings.

(Bruce 2003: 243–238)

This distinction is perhaps too facile, insofar as medieval Catholicism and New England Puritanism could be pretty unbending towards those who transgressed moral rules as well as theological orthodoxy, but it does isolate a structural feature of many, though not all, variants of the Islamicist vision. Many such movements claim to be seeking a ‘restoration’ of an idealised past where sharia rules dominated and where, unlike in the New Testament, there is as much emphasis on what one should do as on what one should not do.

There is also some suggestion that the greater emphasis given to the community over the individual may be problematic for, whilst democratic governance can encompass forms of communal or group representation, defining which groups should be represented remains fraught with difficulty. Of particular concern to most observers of Islamic thought and practice are issues relating to individual and minority rights. Whatever the arguments of liberal Muslim thinkers, there remain deep ambiguities about the extent to which minority rights are guaranteed and protected in those countries where Islam dominates. This is not just a case of authoritarian leaders utilising Islam to justify their own abuses but something more fundamental. As Ann Mayer has shown, many of the major thinkers who have influenced emerging Islamicist movements as well as the constitutions and proclamations of Muslim states on human rights issues tend to hedge guarantees to right with qualifications when it comes to issues relating to gender, minorities and religious difference. Whilst the populations of these countries generally aspire

to human rights protection, those who rule or aspire to rule, and many within the ‘clerical’ elite, would argue that so-called universal principles of rights are being imposed from a Western cultural context and have to be adapted to local circumstances and value systems (Mayer 1995). This may well be, but liberal democracy as commonly understood requires not just participation and competition but, crucially, protection of the rights of minorities and individuals. Whilst there may be legitimate debate about the boundaries of rights in different cultural contexts, the general assumption of international declarations and mainstream democratic thought is that rights should be extended even to those who the majority find alien or even abhorrent. So whilst many Muslims may aspire to democracy and intellectuals may find supportive elements within the tradition, the dominant ideological trends at present remain problematic and tend not to offer strong support for democratic change – which is not to say they might not do so in the future.

There may also be problems at the political level in the weakness of those forces committed to democracy within the Muslim countries. Recent years have seen the emergence of human rights groups in a number of these countries and a number have liberalised to some degree, allowing the appearance of an embryonic civil society if not full political participation (Norton 1995, 1996). But the reality remains that these groups are weak in most cases and ‘liberal’ intellectuals generally have limited influence, especially when they find themselves in competition with more radical groups. Formally many Islamicist opposition groups claim to be committed to a more genuinely democratic order than currently exists in their own countries though, as suggested above, ambiguities remain when explaining how their visions will affect those who dissent or differ – and the experience of the three

purportedly Islamicist states (Iran, Sudan and Afghanistan) has not been positive in this respect. More important may be the fact that they often reject the implantation of political forms created in a West they increasingly despise for both its corrupt lifestyles and perceived negative impact upon their own region or countries. In so doing they repeat the mistakes of those socialists during the immediate post-war years who in legitimately criticising the failures of 'bourgeois democracy' neglected the importance of the civil rights guaranteed by such orders. Instead, they look to an idealised past. At the same time writers such as Graham Fuller have suggested that in the long term recognition of the limits of revolutionary adventurism as well as participation within partially liberalised political orders may in some sense 'tame' Islamicist groups or, as has happened in Iran, demonstrate that the guarantees of liberal democracy are not without positive benefit for their respective causes and populations (Fuller 2003: 193–213).

### **Where does religion make a difference?**

Even if at certain points in time the dominant voice in a religious tradition is more likely to promote or inhibit democratisation does this really matter given religion's marginality in most democratisation processes? After all, most sources see transition coming as a result of changes in elite configurations and perceptions, as a product of socio-economic development, or in response to crises. Religious communities or leaders may play a role in undermining authoritarian regimes but their activism may in turn come as a response to wider social change, or arise from the need to protect their economic, class or institutional interests. So whilst one can argue that specific religious groups made contributions to democratisation in some

circumstances (Poland, the Philippines, or perhaps Brazil and Chile) this tells us nothing about the impact of broad traditions rather than specific organisations or hierarchies. Even the Catholic contribution to the 'third wave' has to be treated with some caution because, whilst many Catholic hierarchies took a prominent role as critic of authoritarian regimes and defender of civil society, some (e.g. in Argentina) adopted an ambiguous position in relation to authoritarian regimes. Though a majority of these transitions took place in 'Catholic countries', this may have had more to do with their similar levels of economic development and place in the world economy than the fact that they were 'Catholic'. Nonetheless, it is the case that the 1960s and 1970s witnessed significant changes in Catholic thinking on the political order and pluralist politics which led to changes in the relationship between national hierarchies and the state in many Catholic countries and which in turn may have impacted upon local political cultures. In many those cultures were predominantly hierarchical and authoritarian, a tendency reinforced by pre-Vatican II-style Catholicism. Changes within the religious institution and its more 'democratic' way of functioning – at least at lower levels – may have contributed towards an undermining of political cultures which had long inhibited, though in themselves prevented, democratic political change.

Conversely, in virtually no countries where Eastern Orthodoxy or Islam predominated – with the possible exception of Indonesia – have religious establishments or oppositions emerged as prominent promoters of democratisation. In the Orthodox case, a few individual priests or bishops may have spoken out about human rights abuses or called for the observance of human rights under the communist regime, but leaders of these churches generally collaborated in suppressing such

voices and did not publicly argue for liberalisation. In the Islamic context, various groups have promoted their own visions of the good society but they have not generally been prominent actors in stressing transition to more pluralistic political orders as amongst their key priorities. In other words, we would appear to have some of Weber's 'correlations between forms of religious beliefs and practical ethics'.

The significance of these 'correlations' is harder to assess. It does appear to be the case the religious tradition, as it has evolved at certain points in history, plays some role in determining whether 'ecclesial' actors will actively promote democracy, sit on the side lines or actively oppose democratisation – though it does not guarantee that they will do the same in every case. It is perhaps more important to pursue the notion that specific traditions, as opposed to particular institutions or individuals, may have more of an impact on the 'consolidation' phase. Though there are many other factors at work in explaining the problems of democratisation in some of the post-Soviet countries – economic decline, poor institutional design, lack of elite commitment – historical and cultural inheritances often make the task harder. To the extent that religious tradition has contributed to the formation of that inheritance, religion may continue to have an influence even in societies where religious practice and political influence are significantly diminished. Assessing the role of political culture is always problematic, as is evaluating religion's contribution to that culture, but arguably both Eastern Orthodoxy and Islam in most of the countries of the former Soviet Union and Balkans have reinforced communalist and authoritarian traditions that are wary of social and religious pluralism. And the behaviour of religious elites since 1990 – in seeking to curtail religious freedom, acquire political

influence or engage in rather dubious economic activities – has tended to reinforce these older patterns rather than those that might be supportive of democratic development. It is not that practising believers – who in these countries generally make up a small minority of the population – are less favourably disposed to democracy than other citizens (White, *et al.* 1994; Vorontsova and Filatov 1994; Fletcher and Sergeev 2002), but that the way in which religion has fed into the wider political culture over time has up to now tended to favour the 'wrong' elements within the political culture of some of these countries.

My argument, therefore, has not been that religious tradition determines the likelihood of democratisation or its successful implementation in any specific country or region, nor do I deny that in most cases other factors are far more important in explaining both transition and the success or otherwise of democratisation. Instead it has been to suggest that the 'correlations' that do exist are not purely accidental and that, though religious traditions are multi-vocal, at any one point in time the dominant voices and practical political circumstances may work more or less in support of democratisation efforts. That this is still a live debate is evident in the continuing and often heated discussions over the role of Islam in inhibiting democratisation but also in recent debates over the likely impact of Protestant–Pentecostal expansion in Latin America, Africa and Asia. For David Martin, it may be the case that this new 'enthusiastic' religion 'will perform a service akin to Methodism in preparing working and lower middle class people for the frugal enjoyment of prosperity, polite public discourse and democratic citizenship' (Martin 1990) – though Gill (1998) sees little attitudinal difference between Catholics and Protestants on public issues. Others are more wary, seeing the circumstances as very different from those of late

eighteenth-century Britain, and stress the deeply 'conservative' political style of the neo-Pentecostal movements (Brouwer, *et al.* 1996: 230). Here is not the place to explore this particular debate but it serves as a useful reminder that there are still interesting problems that need further examination in assessing whether particular religious traditions do impact upon the prospects for successful democratisation and, if so, how. For the time being, the rather weak conclusion of this chapter is that religious tradition still matters, albeit often indirectly, and does so as much by ruling out certain ways of 'doing politics' or setting cultural constraints on politicians seeking to advance the cause of democratisation as by prescribing any specific political form. Religious tradition cannot determine outcomes, but when the factors working for or against democratisation are finely balanced, then whose god is prevalent may just make a difference.

## Note

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