

Comparative Politics



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Source: *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Jul., 1995), pp. 379-391

Published by: Comparative Politics, Ph.D. Programs in Political Science, City University of New York

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/422225>

Accessed: 11-09-2017 10:45 UTC

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The New Religious State

Mark Juergensmeyer

One of the most interesting—some would say disturbing—features of the post-Cold War era is the resurgence of religious politics. It appears as a dark cloud over what many regard as the near-global victory of liberal democracy following the collapse of the Soviet Empire.¹ It fuels regional disputes in North Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia and may be leading toward what Samuel Huntington has apocalyptically called “the clash of civilizations.”² It has led to some impressive gains: radical religious parties are now firmly established not only in Iran but in Algeria, Sudan, Egypt, India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the incipient Palestine, and elsewhere in what was once called the Third World. Although it is tempting to dismiss the religious activists involved in these uprisings as “fundamentalists,” their goals and their motivations are as political as they are religious. For this reason I prefer to call them “religious nationalists,” implying that they are political actors striving for new forms of national order based on religious values.³

The question I will pursue in this essay is how religious nationalists conceive this relationship between religion and politics. In the past several years, I have examined various movements of religious nationalism, including Hindu and Sikh partisans in India, militant Buddhists in Sri Lanka and Mongolia, Christian activists in eastern Europe and Latin America, right-wing Jewish politicians in Israel, and Islamic activists in the Middle East and Central Asia. I have described some of these movements in other essays and in a recent book.⁴ Therefore, I will not discuss these cases in depth here, but rather will explore an issue that I believe is central to virtually all of these movements: their assumption that religion can replace liberal democracy in providing the ideological glue that holds a nation together and that it can provide the justification for a modern religious state.

In this essay I will first describe how traditional religion can play the same ideological role that secular nationalist theories play in providing a theoretical basis for a nation-state. Because of this ideological role, I will then show, religion and liberal democratic ideas are seen as competitive in both the West and the Third World. Finally, I will explore a kind of resolution of this competition: the rise of a potent new synthesis between the nation-state and religion.

The Confrontation of Two Ideologies of Order

One of the most striking features of religious nationalists’ rhetoric is the way that it juxtaposes religion with western notions of national ideology. Secular nationalism is “a kind of religion,” one of the leaders of the Iranian revolution proclaimed.⁵ He and other religious nationalists regard secularism not only as a religion, but as one peculiar to the West.⁶ They assume that secular nationalism responds to the same sorts of needs for collective identity,

ultimate loyalty, and moral authority to which religion has traditionally responded. Some go further and state that the western form of secular nationalism is simply a cover for Christianity. For evidence, they offer the fact that the word "Christian" is used in the title of some political parties in Europe. But whether or not secular nationalism in the West is overtly labeled Christian, most religious activists see it as occupying the same place in human experience as Islam in Muslim societies, Buddhism in Theravada Buddhist societies, and Hinduism and Sikhism in Indian society. To these Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and Sikhs it is perfectly obvious: the West's secular nationalism competes in every way with religion as they know it.

Behind this charge is a certain vision of social reality, one that involves a series of concentric circles. The smallest are families and clans; then come ethnic groups and nations; the largest, and implicitly most important, are global civilizations. Among these civilizations are to be found Islam, Buddhism, and what some who hold this view call "Christendom" and others call "western civilization." Particular nations such as Germany, France, and the United States, in this conceptualization, stand as subsets of Christendom/western civilization; similarly, Egypt, Iran, Pakistan, and other nations are subsets of Islamic civilization.

Are they correct in this assessment, that the social functions of traditional religion and secular nationalism are so similar they both can be regarded as two aspects of a similar phenomenon? Huntington's recent essay seems to agree.⁷ Earlier, Benedict Anderson suggested that religion and secular nationalism are both "imagined communities;" Ninian Smart regarded them both as "world-views."⁸ In an interesting way, these scholars concur with religious nationalists' understanding of the social character of religion: like secular nationalism, religion has the ability to command communal loyalty and to legitimize authority. To this extent I agree with Anderson and Smart—and with many religious nationalists—that religion and secular nationalism are species of the same genus. I prefer to call this genus "ideologies of order."

My use of the word "ideology" should not be misconstrued as an effort to revive the meanings attached to it by Karl Marx or Karl Mannheim or by those identified with the "end of ideology" debate some years ago.⁹ Rather, I use it in the original, late eighteenth century sense. At that time a group of French *idéologues*, as they called themselves, were attempting to build a science of ideas based on the theories of Francis Bacon, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and René Descartes that would be sufficiently comprehensive to replace religion. According to one of the *idéologues*, Destutt de Tracy, whose book *Elements of Ideology* introduced the term to the world, "logic" was to be the sole basis of "the moral and political sciences."¹⁰ In proposing their own "science of ideas" as a replacement for religion, the *idéologues* were in fact putting what they called ideology and what we call religion on an equal plane. Perhaps Clifford Geertz, among modern users of the term, has come closest to its original meaning by speaking of ideology as a "cultural system."¹¹

To make clear that I am referring to the original meaning of the term and not to "political ideology" in a narrow sense or to a Marxian or Mannheimian notion of ideology, I will refer to what I have in mind as "ideologies of order." Both religious and secular nationalistic frameworks of thought are ideologies of order in the following ways: they both conceive of the world around them as a coherent, manageable system; they both suggest that there are levels of meaning beneath the day-to-day world that explain things unseen; they both provide

identity for and evoke loyalty from secular communities; and they both provide the authority that gives social and political order a reason for being. In doing so they define how an individual should properly act in the world, and they relate persons to the social whole.

I have defined both nationalism and religion in terms of order as well as ideology. For this definition there is ample precedent. Regarding nationalism, Karl Deutsch has pointed out the importance of orderly systems of communication in fostering a sense of nationalism.¹² Ernest Gellner argues that the political and economic network of a nation-state requires a spirit of nationalism that draws upon a homogeneous culture, a unified pattern of communication, and a common system of education.¹³ Other social scientists have stressed the psychological aspect of national identity: the sense of historical location that is engendered when individuals feel they are a part of a larger, national history.¹⁴ But behind these notions of community are also images of order, for nationalism always involves the loyalty to an authority who, as Max Weber observed, holds a monopoly over the “legitimate use of physical force” in a given society.¹⁵ Anthony Giddens describes nationalism as the “cultural sensibility of sovereignty,” implying that the awareness of being subject to such an authority—an authority invested with the power of life and death—is what gives nationalism its potency.¹⁶ It is not only an attachment to a spirit of social order but also an act of submission to an ordering agent.

Religion has also been defined in terms of order, albeit in a conceptual more than a political or social sense. Clifford Geertz, for example, sees religion as the effort to integrate messy everyday reality into a pattern of coherence that takes shape at a deeper level.¹⁷ Robert Bellah also thinks of religion as an attempt to reach beyond ordinary phenomena in a “risk of faith” that allows people to act “in the face of uncertainty and unpredictability” on the basis of a higher order of reality.¹⁸ Peter Berger specifies that such faith is an affirmation of the sacred, which acts as a doorway to a more certain kind of truth.¹⁹ Louis Dupré prefers to avoid the term “sacred” but integrates elements of both Berger’s and Bellah’s definitions in his description of religion as “a commitment to the transcendent as to *another* reality.”²⁰ In all of these cases there is a tension between this imperfect, disorderly world and a perfected, orderly one to be found at a higher, transcendent state or in a cumulative moment in time. As Durkheim, whose thought is fundamental to each of these thinkers, was adamant in observing, religion has a more encompassing force than can be suggested by any dichotomization of the sacred and the profane. To Durkheim, the religious point of view includes both the notion that there is such a dichotomy and the belief that the sacred side will always, ultimately, reign supreme.²¹

From this perspective, both religion and secular nationalism are about order. They are therefore potential rivals. Either could claim to be the guarantor of orderliness within a society; either could claim to be the ultimate authority for social order. Such claims carry with them an extraordinary degree of power, for contained within them is the right to give moral sanction for life and death decisions, including the right to kill. When either nationalism or religion assumes this role by itself, it reduces the other to a peripheral social role.

The rivalry has historical roots. Earlier in history it was often religion that denied moral authority to secular politicians, but in recent centuries, especially in the West, it has been the other way around. Political authorities now attempt to monopolize the authority to sanction violence. They asserted this authority long before the advent of the nation-state, but usually

in collusion with religious authority, not in defiance of it. What is unusual about the modern period is how victorious the secular state has been in denying the right of religious authorities to be ultimate moral arbiters. In the modern state, the state alone is given the moral power to kill (albeit for limited purposes, military defense, police protection, and capital punishment). Yet all of the rest of the state's power to persuade and to shape the social order is derived from these fundamental powers. In Max Weber's view, the monopoly over legitimate violence in a society is the very definition of a state.²² But the secular state did not always enjoy a monopoly over this right, and in challenging its authority, today's religious activists, wherever they assert themselves around the world, reclaim the traditional right of religious authorities to say when violence is moral and when it is not.

Religious conflict is one indication of the power of religion to sanction killing. The parties in such an encounter may command a greater degree of loyalty than contestants in a purely political war. Their interests can subsume national interests. In some cases a religious battle may preface the attempt to establish a new religious state. It is interesting to note, in this regard, that the best known incidents of religious violence throughout the contemporary world have occurred in places where it is difficult to define or accept the idea of a nation-state. Palestine, the Punjab, and Sri Lanka are the most obvious examples, but the revolutions in Iran, Nicaragua, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and the countries of eastern Europe also concern themselves with what the state should be like and what elements of society should lead it. In these instances, religion provides the basis for a new national consensus and a new kind of leadership.

Modern religious activists are thereby reasserting the role of religion in most traditional societies where religion, as Donald E. Smith puts it, "answers the question of political legitimacy."²³ In the modern West, this legitimacy is provided by nationalism, a secular nationalism. But even here, religion continues to wait in the wings, a potential challenge to the nationalism based on secular assumptions. Perhaps nothing indicates the continuing challenge of religion more than the persistence of religious politics in American society, including most recently the rise of politically active religious fundamentalists in the 1980s and the potency of the Christian right in the 1992 and 1994 national elections.²⁴ Religion is ready to demonstrate that, like secular nationalism, it can provide a faith in the unitary nature of a society that will authenticate both political rebellion and political rule.

Competition between Religion and Secular Nationalism in the West

Putting aside the recent electoral victories of America's religious right, secular nationalism has largely been the victor in the competition between religion and secular nationalism that has been going on in the West for several centuries now. At one time, the medieval church possessed "many aspects of a state," as one historian put it, and it had commanded more political power "than most of its secular rivals."²⁵ Perhaps more important, religion provided the legitimacy on which the power of monarchy and civil order was based. By the mid nineteenth century, however, the Christian church had ceased to have much influence on European or American politics. The church—the great medieval monument of Christendom with all its social and political panoply—had been replaced by churches, various denominations of Protestantism and a largely depoliticized version of Roman

Catholicism. These churches functioned like religious clubs, voluntary associations for the spiritual edification of individuals in their leisure time, rarely cognizant of the social and political world around them.

Secular nationalism began to replace religion several centuries ago as the ideological agent of political legitimacy.²⁶ But the form in which we know it today—as the ideological ally of the nation-state—did not appear in England and America until the eighteenth century. Only by then had the nation-state taken root deeply enough to nurture an ideological loyalty of its own, unassisted by religious or ethnic identifications, and only by then had the political and military apparatus of the nation-state expanded sufficiently to encompass a large geographic region. Prior to that time, as Giddens explains, “the administrative reach” of the political center was so limited that rulers did not govern in “the modern sense.”²⁷ Until the advent of the nation-state, the authority of a political center did not systematically and equally cover an entire population, so that what appeared to be a single homogeneous polity was in fact a congeries of fiefdoms. The further one got from the center of power, the weaker was the grip of centralized political influence, until at the periphery whole sections of a country might exist as a political no man’s land. Therefore, one should speak of countries prior to the modern nation-state as having frontiers rather than boundaries.²⁸

The changes of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries included the development of the technical ability to knit a country together through roads, rivers, and other means of transportation and communication, the economic ability to do so through an increasingly integrated market structure, an emerging world economic system which was based on the building blocks of nation-states,²⁹ the development of mass education which socialized each generation of youth into a homogeneous society, and the emergence of parliamentary democracy as a system of representation and an expression of the will of people. The glue that held all these changes together was secular nationalism: the notion that individuals naturally associate with the people and place of their ancestral birth in an economic and political system identified with a nation-state. Secular nationalism was thought to be not only natural, but also universally applicable and morally right. Although it was regarded almost as a natural law, secular nationalism was ultimately viewed as an expression of neither god nor nature but of the will of a nation’s citizens. The ideas of John Locke about the origins of a civil community and the “social contract” theories of Jean-Jacques Rousseau required very little commitment to religious belief.³⁰ Although they allowed for a divine order that made the rights of humans possible, their ideas did not directly buttress the power of the church and its priestly administrators, and they had the effect of taking religion—at least church religion—out of public life.

At the same time religion was becoming less political, secular nationalism was becoming more religious. It became clothed in romantic and xenophobic images that would have startled its Enlightenment forbears. The French Revolution, the model for much of the nationalist fervor that developed in the nineteenth century, infused a religious zeal into revolutionary democracy, which took on the trappings of church religion in the priestly power meted out to its demagogic leaders and in the slavish devotion to what it called “the temple of reason.” According to Alexis de Tocqueville, the French Revolution “assumed many of the aspects of a religious revolution.”³¹ The American Revolution also had a religious side: many of its leaders had been influenced by eighteenth century Deism, a

religion of science and natural law which was “devoted to exposing [church] religion to the light of knowledge.”³² As in France, American nationalism developed its own religious characteristics, blending the ideals of secular nationalism and the symbols of Christianity into a “civil religion.”

The nineteenth century fulfilled de Tocqueville’s prophecy that the “strange religion” of secular nationalism would, “like Islam, overrun the whole world with its apostles, militants, and martyrs.”³³ It was spread throughout the world with an almost missionary zeal and was shipped to the newly colonized areas of Asia, Africa, and Latin America as part of the ideological freight of colonialism. It became the ideological partner of what came to be known as “nation-building.” As the colonial governments provided their colonies with the political and economic infrastructures to turn territories into nation-states, the ideology of secular nationalism emerged as a by-product of the colonial nation-building experience. As it had in the West in previous centuries, secular nationalism in the colonized countries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries came to represent one side of a great encounter between two vastly different ways of perceiving the sociopolitical order and the relationship of the individual to the state: one informed by religion, the other by a notion of a secular compact.

In the mid twentieth century, when the colonial powers retreated, they left behind the geographical boundaries they had drawn and the political institutions they had fashioned. Created as administrative units of the Ottoman, Hapsburg, French, and British empires, the borders of most Third World nations continued after independence, even if they failed to follow the natural divisions among ethnic and linguistic communities. By the second half of the twentieth century, it seemed as if the cultural goals of the colonial era had been reached: although the political ties were severed, the new nations retained all the accoutrements of westernized countries. The only substantial empire to remain virtually intact until 1990 was the Soviet Union. It was based on a different vision of political order, of course, in which international socialism was supposed to replace a network of capitalist nations. Yet the perception of many members of the Soviet states was that their nations were not so much integral units in a new internationalism as they were colonies in a secular Russian version of imperialism. This perception became dramatically clear after the breakup of the Soviet Union and its sphere of influence in the early 1990s, when old ethnic and national loyalties sprang to the fore.

Competition between Religion and Secular Nationalism in the Third World

The new nations that emerged as the “Third World” in the middle of the twentieth century had to confront the same competition between religion and nationalism as the West has had to confront, but in a very short period of time, and they simultaneously had to contend with the political by-products of colonial rule. If accommodating religion was difficult for the West, efforts to bridle religion in the new nations were a thousand times more problematic. There, the political competition of religion was much more obvious. Given religious histories that were part of national heritages, religious institutions that were sometimes the nations’ most effective systems of communication, and religious leaders who were often more devoted, efficient, and intelligent than government officials, religion could not be ignored. The attempts to accommodate it, however, have not always been successful, as the following examples indicate.

In Egypt, following the revolution of 1952, Nasser was caught in a double bind. Since his support came from both the Muslim Brotherhood and the modern elite, he was expected to create a Muslim state and a modern secular state at the same time. His approach was to paint an image of an Egypt that was culturally Muslim and politically secular, and he cheerfully went about "Egyptizing along with modernizing," as a professor in Cairo put it.³⁴ The compromise did not work, and especially after Nasser attempted to institute "scientific socialism," which the Muslim Brotherhood regarded as anti-Islamic, the Brotherhood became Nasser's foe. Nasser's successor, Anwar al-Sadat, repeated the pattern, which turned out to be a tragic and fatal mistake. Like Nasser, Sadat raised Muslim expectations by currying favors with the Muslim Brotherhood. In 1971 he released many of them from jail. But by 1974 he and the Brotherhood were at loggerheads, and again the organization was outlawed. Sadat attempted to wear the mantle of Islam by calling himself "Upholder of the Faith," announcing that his first name was really Muhammad rather than Anwar, and promoting religious schools. None of his attempts really worked. Sadat was thought to be a Muslim turncoat. With this image in mind, members of the al-Jihad, a radical fringe group of the Muslim Brotherhood, assassinated him in 1981. His successor, Hosni Mubarak, tried to steer more of a middle course, making no promises to the Muslim activists, but no new secular or socialist departures either.³⁵

In India, three generations of prime ministers in the Nehru dynasty—Jawaharlal, his daughter Indira Gandhi, and her son Rajiv—have all tried to accommodate religion as little as possible. Yet there have been times when they have been forced to make concessions to religious forces almost against their wills. Jawaharlal Nehru seemed virtually allergic to religion, putting secularism alongside socialism as his great political goal. Nonetheless, the Indian constitution and subsequent parliamentary actions have given a great deal of public support to religious entities.³⁶ Religious political parties have elected legislators to national and state assemblies; religious schools have been affiliated with the state; and temples and mosques have received direct public support. In general, the Indian government's attitude has been defined, not by indifference, but instead by an effort to treat each religion with equanimity; as Ainslie Embree puts it, "advocates of secularism in India always insisted . . . that far from being hostile to religion, they valued it."³⁷ Even so, these concessions have not been sufficient to stem the tide of religious politics in India. The 1980s was a decade of tragedy in this regard. Hindu nationalists wanted more and more access to power, prompting defensiveness on the part of Muslim and Christian minorities and a bloody rebellion on the part of the Sikhs. The assassinations of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and her son Rajiv did not put an end to their sense of dissatisfaction, and the election of 1991, which brought to power a Hindu nationalist party in several of India's states, demonstrated the potency of the Hindu right.

In Sri Lanka following independence, the urbane and western-educated leaders of the new nation realized that they would have to give a Sinhalese Buddhist aura to their secular political stance in order for it to be widely accepted. Perhaps no Sri Lankan leader attempted to give in to Buddhist demands as much as did S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, but even he lost his life at the hands of an irate Buddhist monk. The present rulers in Sri Lanka face the same dilemma as their predecessors: they need Sinhalese support, but they feel they can not go so far as to alienate the Tamils and other minority groups. They have been attacked viciously by Sinhalese Buddhist nationalists for attempting to achieve what might be impossible: a

national entity that is both Buddhist and secular. The use of Buddhist symbols is meant to appeal to the Sinhalese, and the adoption of a secular political ideology is supposed to mollify everyone else.

The problem with all these attempts of secular leaders to accommodate religion is that they lead to a double frustration: the leaders are considered traitors from both a religious and a secular point of view. Moreover, these compromises suggest that spiritual and political matters are separate, which most religious activists see as a capitulation to the secularist point of view. They sense that behind the compromises is a basic allegiance to secular nationalism rather than to religion.

A New Synthesis: The Religious Nation-State

Religious activists are well aware that, if a nation starts with the premise of secular nationalism, religion is often made marginal to the political order. This marginality is especially onerous from many revolutionary religious perspectives, including the Iranian, the Sikh, and the Sinhalese, because they regard the two ideologies as unequal: the religious one is far superior. Rather than to start with secular nationalism, they prefer to begin with religion.

The implication of this way of speaking is not that religion is antithetical to nationalism, but that religious rather than secular nationalism is the appropriate premise on which to build a nation, even a modern nation-state. In fact, virtually every reference to nationhood used by religious nationalists assumes that the modern nation-state is the only way in which a nation can be construed.

Although the link between religion and nationalism has historical precedents, the present attempt to forge an alliance between religion and the modern democratic nation-state is a new development in the history of nationalism, and it immediately raises the question whether it is possible: whether what we in the West think of as a modern nation—a unified, democratically controlled system of economic and political administration—can in fact be accommodated within religion. Many western observers would automatically answer no. Even as acute an interpreter of modern society as Giddens regarded most religious cultures as at best a syncretism between “tribal cultures, on the one hand, and modern societies, on the other.”³⁸

Yet by Giddens’ own definition of a modern nation-state, postrevolutionary Iran would qualify: the Islamic revolution in Iran has solidified not just a central power but a systematic control over the population that is more conducive to nationhood than the monarchical political order of the shah. A new national entity came into being that was quite different from both the polity under the old Muslim rulers and the nation the shah ineptly attempted to build. The shah dreamed of creating Ataturk’s Turkey in Iran and bringing to his country what he perceived as the instant modernity brought to Turkey by Ataturk. Ironically, Khomeini—along with his integrative religious ideology and his grass-roots network of mullahs—ultimately accomplished the unity and national organization that the shah had sought.

A similar claim is made in India, where Hindu nationalists are emphatic on the point that “Hindutva,” as they call Hindu national culture, is the defining characteristic of Indian

nationalism. In Sri Lanka, according to one Sinhalese writer, “it is clear that the unifying, healing, progressive principle” that held together the entity known as Ceylon throughout the years has always been “the Buddhist faith.”³⁹ The writer goes on to say that religion in Sri Lanka continues to provide the basis for a “liberating nationalism” and that Sinhalese Buddhism is “the only patriotism worthy of the name, worth fighting for or dying for.”⁴⁰ Similar sentiments are echoed in movements of religious nationalism in Egypt, Israel, and elsewhere in the world.

In these efforts to accommodate modern politics, has religion compromised its purity? Some religious leaders think that it has. In favoring the nation-state over a particular religious congregation as its major community of reference, religion loses the exclusivity held by smaller, subnational religious communities, and the leaders of those communities lose some of their autonomy. Many religious leaders are therefore suspicious of religious nationalism. Among them are religious utopians who would rather build their own isolated political societies than to deal with the problems of a whole nation, religious liberals who are satisfied with the secular nation-state the way it is, and religious conservatives who would rather ignore politics altogether. Some Muslims have accused Khomeini of making Islam into a political ideology and reducing it to the terms of modern politics. Moreover, as Bernard Lewis claims, most Islamic rebellions are aimed in the opposite direction: to shed Islam of the alien idea of the nation-state.⁴¹ Yet, even if that is their aim, one of the curious consequences of their way of thinking is the appropriation of many of the most salient elements of modern nationhood into an Islamic frame of reference. Rather than ridding Islam of the nation-state, they too have created a new synthesis.

Modern movements of religious nationalism, therefore, are subjects of controversy within both religious and secular circles. The marriage between religious faith and the nation-state is an interesting turn in modern history, fraught with dangers, for even if it is possible, the radical accommodation of religion to nationalism may not necessarily be a good thing. A merger of the absolutism of nationalism with the absolutism of religion might create a rule so vaunted and potent that it might destroy itself and its neighbors as well. The actions of religious terrorists in the 1980s and early 1990s in South Asia and the Middle East warrant some of those fears. When a society’s secular state and its religious community are both strong and respected, the power of life and death that is commanded by any single absolute authority—be it secular or religious—may be held tenuously in check. Without that balance, an absolute power of the worst sort could claim its most evil deeds to be legitimate moral duties. The revolutionary religious movements that have emerged in many parts of the world in the 1980s and 1990s exhibit some of those dangers—as well as many of the more hopeful aspects—of the religious nationalists’ synthesis between the two great ideologies of order.

Modernity and the Religious State

One of the reasons why it is difficult to gauge whether the new religious states will become congenial members of the family of nations is that the few that have come into existence in recent years—such as Iran, Afghanistan, and Sudan—are still in the process of formation. Movements that favor religious nationalism in other countries are even more unspecific about what kind of detailed governmental rules and limitations their religion prescribes:

there is no single model of religious politics. Some have claimed that religion—Buddhism in the case of Sri Lanka, for example—has a strong affinity with socialism.⁴² Others have asserted that it is compatible with capitalism: the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, for instance, guarantees the right of private property.⁴³ In India, Hindu nationalists have made a distinction between nation and state, claiming that, as long as the country has a clear sense of national identity and moral purpose, the specific political framework and policies of the state matter little.⁴⁴ The policy stands of the Hindu BJP party during the 1991 election campaign were remarkably similar to those of secular political parties: it stated that, despite its affirmation of Hinduism as the ideological glue that holds the nation together, it has no intention of “running a Hindu government.”⁴⁵ The political role of religion is primarily in formulating national identity and purpose, and some religious nationalists claim that, as long as government leaders are “in touch with the God behind the justice and the truth that the government espouses,” as one Jewish nationalist put it, they will be satisfied.⁴⁶

There are, however, differing points of view within religious nationalist movements, and one of the differences is over the role that religion should play in day-to-day governmental affairs. In Iran, the influence of the clergy has waned since the mid 1980s. In India, there is a tension between the often ragtag band of religious mendicants who help get out the vote for Hindu parties and the middle class urbanites who lead them. Among the latter are what the Indian press during the 1991 elections referred to as “Scuppies,” saffron-clad yuppies; they are successful businessmen and administrators who see in Hindu political parties a stabilizing influence on the country and not a narrow dogmatism.⁴⁷ In other movements of religious nationalism one can also find this “Scuppie” pattern of an educated, urban religious elite linked with a large, disenfranchised rural constituency. In Sri Lanka, for instance, uneducated rural youth were tied to groups of urban student allies. In Palestine, many of the Muslim leaders were educated and trained abroad. The same was true of the Islamic Front in Algeria, where many participants in the 1991–92 uprising were highly educated doctors, scientists, and university professors. According to one of them, Fouad Delissi, a forty-year-old party leader in the popular quarter of bab al-Oued who worked as a maintenance director for Algeria’s petroleum products retailing company, “if there are people who consider themselves democrats . . . it’s us.” The Muslim leader’s circle of comrades included a majority who had studied in the United States or in France, and their interest in being involved in the Islamic political movement was to help “guide the country in a scientific, normal, modern way.”⁴⁸

Since they appear to have a broad outlook on their own society and its role within the larger international context, can we take these Algerian religious nationalists at their word and accept them as “modern”? The answer to that question depends in large measure on what is meant by “modern.” A number of scholars has insisted on distinguishing between “modernity,” largely defined as the acceptance of bureaucratic forms of organization and the acquisition of new technology, and “modernism,” described as embracing the ideology of individualism and a relativist view of moral values. This distinction allows us to observe that religious nationalists are modern without being modernist.⁴⁹ Although they reject what they regard as the perverse and alienating features of modernity, they are in every other way creatures of the modern age.

In Giddens’ frame of reference, it is perhaps inevitable that this be so. Nationalism, from his point of view, is a condition for entry into a modern world political and economic system

based on the building blocks of nation-states. It is unthinkable that a political or economic entity can function without some relationship to large patterns of international commerce and political alignment, and this relationship requires strong centralized control on a national level in order for it to be maintained. Since movements for religious nationalism aim at strengthening national identities, they can be seen as highly compatible with the modern system.

Religious nationalism, then, may be viewed as one way of bringing heretofore unreconcilable elements—traditional religion and modern politics—into collusion with one another. Those religious movements that are not nationalist and not political have been hostile to the nation-state, and they can legitimize the views of those who oppose the notion of a global nation-state system. In a similar vein, Wilfred Cantwell Smith contended in the mid 1950s that there was a fundamental opposition between Islam and modernity, by which he meant not only the attributes of modernism that Lawrence has mentioned, but also the fact that the transnationalism of Islamic culture has mitigated against the nation-state.⁵⁰ Recent movements of Islamic nationalism, however, have been surprisingly particular to individual nation-states and provide a remarkable synthesis of Islamic culture and modern nationalism. As one observer of the Iranian revolution remarked, it has “no precedent” in modern history.⁵¹ Since the revolution, however, there has been a number of attempts in other parts of the world to achieve the kind of synthesis of traditional culture and modern politics to which the Iranian revolution aspires.

Currently throughout the world, the nation-state continues to be critical to global politics. Rather than challenging this fact, the new religious politics accommodates itself to it. It does so in the Third World as well as in the West, not only for ideological reasons but also for economic ones, since nation-states are the essential units of a global market system. In the past, religion had very little role to play in this scheme, and when it did become involved, it often threatened it. Contemporary religious politics, then, is the result of an almost Hegelian dialect between two competing frameworks of social order: secular nationalism (allied with the nation-state) and religion (allied with large ethnic communities). The clashes between them have often been destructive, but they have also offered possibilities for accommodation. These encounters have given birth, in some parts of the world, to a synthesis, in which religion has become the new ally of the nation-state.

NOTES

1. For the optimistic point of view that liberal democracy has triumphed, see Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History,” *The National Interest*, 16 (Summer 1989), 3–18; and *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), pp. xi–xxiii.

2. Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?,” *Foreign Affairs*, 72 (Summer 1993), 2–11; and “If Not Civilizations, What? Paradigms of the Post-Cold War World,” *Foreign Affairs*, 72 (November–December 1993), 186–94.

3. See Mark Juergensmeyer, “Why Religious Nationalists Are Not Fundamentalists,” *Religion*, 23 (Spring 1993).

4. See Mark Juergensmeyer, “The Logic of Religious Violence,” in David C. Rapoport, ed., *Inside Terrorist Organizations* (London: Frank Cass, 1988), pp. 172–93; “What the Bhikkhu Said: Reflections on the Rise of Militant Religious Nationalism,” *Religion*, 20 (1990), 53–75; and *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). Some of the book’s arguments and revised segments from it have been incorporated into this essay.

5. Abolhassan Banisadr, *The Fundamental Principles and Precepts of Islamic Government* (Lexington: Mazda Publishers, 1981), p. 40.
6. Interview with Dr. Essem el Arian, Member of the National Assembly, Cairo, January 11, 1989; Sheik Ahmed Yassin, Gaza, January 14, 1989; and Bhikkhu Udawawala Chandrananda, Kandy, Sri Lanka, January 5, 1991.
7. Huntington, "Clash of Civilizations?."
8. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983); and Ninian Smart, *Worldviews: Crosscultural Explorations of Human Beliefs* (New York: Scribner's, 1983).
9. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (New York: International Publishers, 1939); Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1936); David Apter, ed., *Ideology and Discontent* (New York: The Free Press, 1964); and Chaim I. Waxman, ed., *The End of Ideology Debate* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964).
10. Destutt de Tracy, *Elements of Ideology*, in Richard H. Cox, *Ideology, Politics, and Political Theory* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1969), p. 17.
11. Clifford Geertz, "Ideology as a Cultural System," in Apter, ed.
12. Karl Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1966).
13. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), p. 140.
14. Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1979), p. 3. See also L. Doob, *Patriotism and Nationalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964).
15. Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 78. Regarding the state's monopoly on violence, see John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982); and Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism* (London: Duckworth, 1971).
16. Anthony Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism, Volume Two: The Nation-State and Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 219.
17. Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," reprinted in William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt, eds., *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach*, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 168.
18. Robert Bellah, "Transcendence in Contemporary Piety," in Donald R. Cutler, *The Religious Situation: 1969* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 907.
19. Peter Berger, *The Heretical Imperative* (New York: Doubleday, 1980), p. 38. See also Peter Berger, *Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967).
20. Louis Dupré, *Transcendent Selfhood: The Loss and Rediscovery of the Inner Life* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), p. 26. For a discussion of Berger's and Dupré's definitions, see Mary Douglas, "The Effects of Modernization on Religious Change," *Daedalus*, 111 (Winter 1982), 1-19.
21. Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1976), pp. 38-39.
22. Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," p. 78.
23. Donald E. Smith, ed., *Religion, Politics, and Social Change in the Third World: A Sourcebook* (New York: The Free Press, 1971), p. 11.
24. See Randall Balmer, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Bruce Lawrence, *Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt against the Modern Age* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989).
25. Joseph Strayer, *Medieval Statecraft and the Perspectives of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 323.
26. Strayer, *Medieval Statecraft*, pp. 262-65.
27. Giddens, *Nation-State*, p. 4.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 4. See also "Frontiers into Boundaries: The Evolution of the Modern State," ch. 5 of Ainslie T. Embree, *Imagining India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 67-84.
29. Giddens, *Nation-State*, pp. 255ff. See also Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Academic Press, 1974); Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System II: Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy, 1600-1750* (New York: Academic Press, 1980); and Sidney Pollard, *Peaceful Conquest: The Industrialization of Europe, 1760-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).
30. John Locke, *The Second Treatise on Government*, ch. 8, "Of the Beginnings of Political Societies" (New York:

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31. Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1955), p. 11. See also John McManners, *The French Revolution and the Church* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1969).
32. Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), p. 171. Among the devotees of Deism were Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and other founding fathers of America.
33. De Tocqueville, *The Old Regime*, p. 13.
34. Interview with Professor Leila el-Hamamsy, American University, Cairo, January 10, 1989.
35. Interview with Professor Saad Ibrahim, Cairo, January 10, 1989.
36. See Donald E. Smith, *India as a Secular State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), which details the many concessions the government has made.
37. Ainslie Embree, *Utopias in Conflict: Religion and Nationalism in Modern India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 88.
38. Giddens, *The Nation-State*, p. 71.
39. D. C. Vejayavardhana, *The Revolt in the Temple: Composed to Commemorate 2,500 Years of the Land, the Race, and the Faith* (Colombo: Sinha Publications, 1953), reprinted in Smith, ed., *Religion, Politics and Social Change*, p. 105.
40. Vejayavardhana, *The Revolt in the Temple*, p. 105.
41. Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).
42. Stanley Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed?*, pp. 117–18.
43. *Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran* (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1980), Article 47, p. 46.
44. See Ainslie T. Embree, "The Function of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh: To Define the Hindu Nation," in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, eds., *Accounting for Fundamentalisms* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 5.
45. Zafar Agha, "BJP Government: What Will It Be Like?," *India Today*, May 15, 1991, pp. 20–21.
46. Interview with Rabbi Levinger, a leader of the Gush Emunim, Jerusalem, January 16, 1989.
47. Madhu Jain, "BJP Supporters: Invasion of the Scuppies," *India Today*, May 15, 1991, pp. 18–19.
48. Kim Murphy, "Algerian Election to Test Strength of Radical Islam," *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 26, 1991, p. 19.
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50. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Islam in Modern History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 47.
51. Sick, *All Fall Down*, p. 185.