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RELIGION IN GLOBAL POLITICS: EXPLAINING DEPRIVATIZATION

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Abstract

Examples of religion's recent political impact abound in states at varying levels of economic and political development. The paper examines the relationship between religion and politics over the last quarter century in a variety of countries; in effect, a global survey. What was new and became 'news' in the 1980s was the widespread and simultaneous refusal of the so-called 'world religions' - Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism - to restrict them selves to the private sphere. Religious organizations of various kinds seem openly to be rejecting the secular ideals dominating most national policies, appearing as champions of alternative, confessional options. In keeping faith with what they interpret as divine decree, increasingly they refuse to render to nonreligious power either material or moral tribute. They are also refusing to restrict themselves to the pastoral care of individual souls, instead raising questions about, inter alia, the interconnections of private and public morality and the claims of states and markets to be exempt from extrinsic normative considerations.

Keywords: *Religion, Politics, Explaining, Deprivatization*

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A. Introduction

Around the world religious organizations are openly rejecting the secular ideals that dominate most national policies, appearing as champions of alternative, confessional options. In keeping faith with what they interpret as divine decree, increasingly they refuse to render to nonreligious power either material or moral tribute. They are increasingly concerned with political issues, challenging the legitimacy and autonomy of the primary secular spheres, the state, political organization and the market economy. They are also refusing to restrict themselves to the pastoral care of individual souls, instead raising questions about, *inter alia*, the interconnections of private and public morality and the claims of states and markets to be exempt from extrinsic normative considerations. Intent on retaining social importance, many religious organizations seek to elude what they regard as the cumbersome constraints of temporal authority, threatening to usurp constituted political functions. In short, refusing to be condemned to the realm of privatize belief, religion is once again appearing in the public sphere, thrusting into issues of moral and political contestation.

My argument is that, around the world, religion is leaving, or refusing to accept, its assigned place in the private sphere. This is true, I believe, even in highly secular societies like that of England where mainline Christian churches have recently re-emerged as important social, moral and - to a degree - political voices. There, building on a tradition established during the premiership of Margaret Thatcher in the 1970s, the publication in October 1996 of the Catholic Church's 13,000-word pamphlet, *The Common Good and the Catholic Church's Social Teaching*, was an important intervention in the political debate between the Labour and Conservative parties. Politicians - especially of the latter party - saw it as an endorsement of Labour's policies. Six months later - in April 1997 - 11 churches collectively published a further report entitled, *Unemployment and the Future of Work*, an outspoken attack on the inability of the main parties in Britain to focus upon the amelioration of the suffering of the underprivileged. The report accused them of putting tax cuts before solutions to poverty and unemployment in the battle for victory in the May 1997 general election (Bellos & White 1997).

Concerned with overtly political issues, *The Common Good* and *Unemployment and the Future of Work* were both manifestations of the contemporary process of repolitization of the increasingly private religious and moral spheres in England. The reports represented an attempt to reestablish ethical norms of behavior and activities in public and political spheres and to present a political case for so doing. In the publications, mainline churches endorsed what were clearly political goals, expressing opposition to the dualism between religion and politics, and arguing that the concerns of social justice were, in fact, not only scripturally rooted, but also wedded to the defense of liberal democracy, pluralism and the market economy (Watson, 1994: 149; Huntington, 1991, 1993). In short, the central issue for the churches was the degree to which the consumerist version of politics should be modified or balanced by the social dimension (Edwards, 1990; Glasman, 1996).

However, it is not only churches in England that are concerned with social, economic and political issues. Globally, numerous religious organizations and institutions share a desire to change their societies in a religious direction. In pursuit of this objective, they use a variety of tactics and methods some, like the British churches, lobby, protest and publish reports at the level of civil society; others seek desired changes via political society - for example, the American New Christian Right regularly endorses electoral candidates with the most 'pro-religion' (or 'pro-life') policies; a few - Islamists in Algeria and Egypt - regularly resort to violence and terrorism to achieve their goals. However, from the perspective of academic inquiry the means to achieve goals are perhaps less important than the ends pursued whatever the chosen modes of political interaction, what is new and unexpected in all this is the re-modeling and re-assumption of public roles by religion which theories of secularization had long condemned to social and political marginalization.

What is happening in the sphere of religion and politics, on the one hand, involves widespread, if patchy, 'deprivatization' of previously privatized religions in the Western world, where there is a more or less clear tripartite division of democratic polities into state, political society, and civil society; according to conventional social science wisdom such an arrangement should - inevitably - lead to religion's privatization and corresponding decline in social and political importance. On the other hand, where the process of religious privatization is not so far advanced - that is, in nearly all Third World countries - it is the *fear* of imminent or creeping privatization which provides the main stimulus for religion to act politically.

B. Explaining Religious Deprivatization

To understand the political importance of religious actors, we need to comprehend what they say and do in their relationship with the state. Following Stepan (1988 3), I mean something more than 'mere' government when referring to the state it is the continuous administrative, legal, bureaucratic, and coercive system that attempts not only to manage the state apparatus but in addition to 'structure relations between civil and public power and to structure many crucial relationships within civil and political society'. Almost everywhere, states seek to reduce religion's political influence - that is, they seek to privatize it, significantly to reduce its political importance. In countries at differing levels of economic development - for example, the USA, Nigeria, Tanzania, Indonesia, Israel, Burma and Poland - states attempt to erect civil religions, that is, where certain designated religious formats 'function as the cult of the political community' (Casanova 1994: 58). The purpose is to create forms of consensual, corporate religion, claiming to be guided by general, culturally appropriate, societally-specific religious beliefs, not necessarily tied institutionally to any specific religious tradition (Hallencreutz & Westerlund 1996; Liebman & Eliezer 1983). The main point is that the development of civil religion is a strategy to avoid social conflicts and promote national coordination, especially in countries with serious religious or ideological divisions. However, civil religions are often perceived by minority religious persuasions to be aimed at installing and perpetuate the hegemony of one religious tradition at the expense of others.

But religion's relationship with the state is not only bounded by attempts to build civil religions - it is of greater public salience in a wide range of state-religion relationships. That relations between religious organizations and the state have become more visible and often increasingly problematic in many countries in recent years does not, of course, constitute in itself evidence against the idea that states in the contemporary era do not need the kind of religious legitimating exemplified by civil religion. One certainly has, for example, to entertain the possibility that the recent proliferation of religious-based challenges to the authority of the state is merely transitory reactions to the onward march of secularization. Moreover, even if - as some significant figures in social science have claimed - the modern state is particularly vulnerable to legitimating crises, that does not in itself mean that religion is becoming again *automatically* relevant to the functioning of the state machinery. Normally, religion-based challenges have their roots in endeavors by the state to assert a monitoring role vis-à-vis religion, in effect to control it.

Traditionally, problems of church-state interaction are found in various Western contexts. However, expanding the problem of church-state relations to non-Christian contexts necessitates some preliminary conceptual clarifications - not least because the very idea of a prevailing state-church dichotomy is culture-bound. *Church* is a Christian institution, while the modern understanding of *state* is deeply rooted in the Post-Reformation European political experience. In their specific cultural setting and social significance, the tension and the debate over the church-state relationship are uniquely Western phenomena, present in the ambivalent dialectic of 'render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's and unto God the things which be God's (Luke, 21-25). Overloaded with Western cultural history, these two concepts cannot easily be translated into non-Christian terminologies. Some religions - for example, Hinduism - have no ecclesiastical structure at all. Consequently, there *cannot* be a clerical challenge to India's secular state comparable to that of Buddhist monks in South East Asia or Shiite mullahs in Iran. However, political parties and movements energized by religious notions - especially Hinduism and Sikhism - are of great importance in contemporary India.

Regarding Third World regions, only in Latin America is it pertinent to speak of church-state relations along the lines of the European model. This is so because of the historical regional dominance of the Roman Catholic Church and the creation of European-style states in the early nineteenth century. But the traditional European-centric Christian conceptual framework of church-state relations appears alien within and with respect to nearly all African and Asian societies - whether predominantly Christian, Islamic, Buddhist or Hindu - or involving religious mixes of various kinds.

The differences between Christian conceptions of state and church and those of other world religions are well illustrated by reference to Islam. In the Muslim tradition, mosque is not church. The closest Islamic approximation to 'state' - *dawla* - means, as a concept, either a ruler's dynasty or his administration (Vatikiotis, 1987: 36). Only with the specific Durkheimian stipulation of *church* as the generic concept for *moral community*, *priest* for the *custodians of the sacred law*, and *state* for *political community* can we comfortably use these concepts in Islamic and other non-Christian contexts. On the theological level, the command-obedience nexus that constitutes the Islamic definition of authority is not demarcated by conceptual categories of religion and politics. Life as a physical reality is an expression of divine will and authority (*qudrah'*). There is no validity in separating the matters of piety from those of the polity; both are divinely ordained. Yet, although both religious and political authorities are legitimated Islamically, they invariably constitute two independent social institutions. They do, however, regularly interact with each other (Dabashi, 1987: 183).

Once many believed it axiomatic that modernization would lead to religious privatization and, ineluctably, to secularization. In other words, it was believed *inevitable* that a *global* decline was occurring in religion's social and political importance. But the 1979 revolution in Iran burst onto the scene, suggesting not only that there was more than one interpretation of modernization but also that it could be that religion plays a leading role. Since then, religion in politics seems to be everywhere. Three questions are central in seeking to account for religion's current impact on politics. First, why should religious organizations become political actors? I contend that this normally occurs when religion feels under serious threat from secular policies. Second, how widespread is the phenomenon? My starting assumption is that it is widespread, although case by case study would be necessary to verify or falsify this conjecture. Third, what are the political consequences of religion's intervention? The short answer is they are variable. Sometimes religion appears to have a pivotal influence on political outcomes - for example, the role of the Catholic church in the return to democracy in Latin America and Eastern Europe in the 1980s - while elsewhere - for example, in the attempts by Algerian Islamists to force the government to stand down despite a civil war costing a reported 60,000 lives - it seems unable to influence political outcomes definitively, at least in the short term.

For analytical convenience I will divide the world into two parts, the West and the Third World, with Eastern Europe - the former Second World - treated as part of the former because of state-imposed secularization over decades during the communist era.

1. *The West*

Two phenomena are simultaneously taking place in the West: a) there is an increase in various forms of spirituality and religiosity; b) leading churches are articulating viewpoints on political and social issues more readily and openly than in the past. I have already suggested that the latter phenomenon is because many churches are no longer willing to be sidelined as states' jurisdictions expand into areas previously under their control. But are people becoming personally more religious while their societies are becoming collectively more secular? Three main arguments have been offered in this regard; a) religion takes the place of secular ideologies which no longer have wide appeal; b) religion becomes popular on a cyclical basis; c) religion, expressed in new religious movements, emerges in response to the impact of modernity and/or post modernity. Let us look at each argument.

First, people are believed to be turning to religion in the West in response to a decline in the attraction of secular ideologies, especially communism and socialism people *need* something to believe in, and religion fits the bill, especially in the context of the 'New World Disorder' of the 1990s (Jowitt 1993). During this period of uncertainty, many people are thought to be rediscovering the religious dimension to group identity. Religiously pluralistic Societies - especially the USA - have increased emphasis on religion as a basis of group identity which is, it is argued, politically destabilizing. The main problem with this explanation is that religion has not returned *only* in the 1990s. Rather, in some countries - the USA is the archetypal example - political religion has been a feature since the 1960s with a decline of the influence of civil religion.

Second, we are also said to be witnessing what is merely a cyclical phenomenon periodically there is a collective 'thirst' for religion (Martin, 1994). Shupe (1990: 20) argues that religion has been a significant factor in a number of political mass movements in the West over the last 30 years, including 'the American civil rights movement, the Northern Ireland struggle of independence … and the Moral Majority in the United States'. The conclusion he draws is that this-worldly answers to the meaning and purpose of life periodically appear alienating and unsatisfying to many people as a result, religious beliefs periodically find fresh relevance and power, perhaps within new structures and patterns of belief. Yet what needs to be explained it why should religion enjoy a periodic resurgence? What set of factors needs to be in operation to trigger this development? This is not satisfactorily answered by the proponents of the cyclical theory of religious resurgence.

Third, it is suggested that statistics indicate that people are becoming 'more' religious in the West, rather than less secularization is being reversed. The argument hinges partly on surveys purportedly showing growing attendance at religious services and more religious book buying (Duke and Johnson, 1989; Martin, 1994). It is also dependent on the large numbers of new religious movements emerging, including the fast-growing 'charismatic' Christian phenomenon, unattached to any strong doctrinal tradition. Charismatic are Christians who believe in the 'power of present manifestations of the Holy Spirit but, unlike Pentecost lists, choose to remain in mainline congregations' (Coleman 1996 30). Charismatic Christianity is a widespread non-denominational tendency based on a belief in the divinely-inspired gifts of speaking in tongues, healing, prophecy, and so on, offering devotee's spiritual excitement. Charismatic are often thought to eschew politics because religion and politics should be kept separate.

There are many other new religious and spiritual phenomena in the West - including various manifestations of what is known as 'New Age' spirituality; various 'exotic' Eastern religions like the Hare Krishna cult; 'televangelism'; renewed interest in astrology, and new sects like the Scientologists. Yet, such religious groups, Casanova (1994: 5) points out, are 'not particularly relevant for the social sciences or for the self-understanding of modernity', because they do not present 'major problems of interpretation … They fit within expectations and can be interpreted within the framework of established theories of secularization'. The point is that they are *normal* phenomena, examples of *neither private* religion which do not challenge - nor wish to - the dominant political a social structures. Such religious phenomenon are very often *apolitical*; 'all' they really show is that many people are interested in spiritual issues. Yet, in many Western Catholic countries - for example, Italy and Spain - the Church has lost much of its moral appeal for many people, especially the young (Hooper 1996). In sum, it is correct to stress that the multiplicity of extant religious phenomena belie any popular loss of interest in religious meaning - even in apparently highly secular countries - and that innovative religious forms are gaining ground, often at the expense of traditional religions. But from a *political* perspective new religions are not of importance.

To assess religion's socio-political role in the West it is necessary to separate two linked - yet analytically autonomous - phenomena, which are often unwarrantedly conflated. First, as already noted, there is said to be a widespread revival of religious belief in the West. Woollacott (1995) writes that 'anybody who had prophesied 30 years ago that the 20th century would end with a resurgence of religion, with great new cathedrals, mosques, and temples rising up, with the symbols and songs of faith everywhere apparent, would, in most circles, have been derided'. Second, many religious organizations in the West are involving themselves in political, social and moral questions to a considerable degree. These two developments may well be connected *but they are not the same thing*. Woollacott says nothing about the political impact of perceived religious resurgence, nor what has caused it. Given that one of the areas in the throes of an apparent religious revival - Eastern Europe - is a region where religion was, until recently, strongly controlled by the state, it is not that surprising that once restraints are withdrawn then it will assume a higher profile. But does this mean that religion then *necessarily* assumes a higher political profile, just because there are more openly religious people than before? My tentative answer is no. For example, the Russian Orthodox Church has failed to involve itself extensively in political controversies despite a popular shift to religion in the post-communist era. In other words, Russian society may now be highly religious at the level of individual belief, but this has not led to an institutionalized political role for the Orthodox Church - probably because the Church cannot easily shake of the behavior of the last 80 years.

The point is that Russia was a highly secular society during the communist era. More generally, it has long been believed that as society modernizes it secularizes - that is, it becomes more complex with a division of labour emerging whereby institutions become more highly specialized and increasingly in need of their own technicians. When this happens, religious agencies - once concerned with a variety of activities including heath delivery, government and the interplay of gender relations - are forced, like the Russian Orthodox Church during communism, to withdraw to the core area of expertise the spiritual realm. The end result of secularization is of course a secular society that is, where the pursuit of politics takes place irrespective of predominant religious interests.

Secularization has been one of the main social and political trends in Western Europe since the Enlightenment (1720-80). A quarter century ago Smith (1970: 6) - following such senior figures of nineteenth century social science as Marx, Durkheim, Weber - declared secularization 'the most fundamental structural and ideological change in the process of political development', a global trend, a universal facet of modernization. As Shupe (1990: 19) puts it, the 'demystification of religion inherent in the classic secularization paradigm posited a gradual, persistent, unbroken erosion of religious influence' as societies modernized.

The existence of a stubbornly significant role for religion in two Western environments - the USA and Northern Ireland - cast doubt on the secularization thesis. Additionally, while *most* Western countries are to a large degree secularized in some churches are involving themselves in political controversies in a manner unthinkable 20 or 30 years ago. The point is that 'when religion finds or retains work to do other than relating people to the supernatural' it is likely to have a public voice and a concern with socio-political issues (Bruce 1993 51). I posit that *only* when religion does something other than intercede between the individual and God does it keep a high place in people's attentions and in their politics in otherwise highly secular societies.

Both Northern Ireland and the USA fit the bill in this regard. In the former, religion is an integral component of local communities' strategies of *cultural defense*. When 'culture, identity, and a sense of worth are challenged by a source promoting either an alien religion or rampant secularism and that source is negatively valued' then religion will serve as an important facet of group solidarity (Wallis and Bruce, 1992: 17-18). In Northern Ireland, religion furnishes resources for asserting a group's claim to a sense of worth, where differing religious interpretations not only form the basis of group identity but also amount to an ideology of defense from encroachment from the feared 'other'. Both sets of believers - Catholics and Protestants - believe that the other lot is out to crush them and their religious (and ethnic) identity - hence, the retention of religion helps not only to bolster one's *personal* sense of identity but also helps to maintains a strong *collective* ethos against outside attack.

In the USA, religion has a continuing high social and political profile because it helps those engaged in the prolonged process of *cultural transition*. Cultural transition refers to the notion that when a religious group's identity is threatened by modernization it will turn to its theology to furnish the means to fight back, serving as an ideology of group solidarity (Wallis and Bruce, 1992;

Walker 1996; Abramsky, 1996). Fundamentalist Christians - an important feature of the political scene in the USA over the last 25 years - exhibit the desire to stop the encroachment of secularization, perceived as the work of the Devil. The overall point is that in both the USA and Northern Ireland religion furnishes the resources either for dealing with the effects of modernization and cultural transitions or for asserting a group's claim to a sense of worth during times of profound social change.

2. *The Third World*

Surveys indicate that most people in nearly all Third World countries are religious believers (Duke and Johnson 1989). Some argue that there is widespread growth of religious movements with political goals in the Third World which emerged in the 1980s (Thomas, 1995; Casanova, 1994). Many are grassroots movements led or coordinated by middle- or low-ranking religious professionals. Sometimes, as in Guatemala, the perceived secularization of the Catholic Church 'seems to bear a direct and inverse correlation to the strength of popular religious movements and organizations, especially in indigenous sectors' (Garrard-Burnett, 1996: 98).

Why should there be an increase in numbers of Third World religious groups with political goals? Sahliyeh (1990: 15) maintains that social upheaval and economic dislocation connected to the processes of modernization have sent people *back* to religion in the Third World. Miles (1996: 525) argues that in the 1990s, a period of social, economic and political transition in many countries, 'populations throughout the developing world … are *rediscovering* the religious dimension to group identity and statist politics' (emphasis added in both). Sahliyeh and Miles are claiming that there has been a 'return' to religion in the Third World, the consequence of inconclusive or unsatisfactory modernization, disillusionment with secular nationalism, problems of state legitimacy, political oppression and incomplete national identity, widespread socioeconomic grievances, and the perceived erosion of traditional morality and values. The simultaneity of these crises is said to provide a fertile milieu for the growth of political religion.

I do not doubt that such factors provide an enabling environment for religion's political prominence in the Third World. I am equally sure that unwelcome developments prod many people to look to religion to provide answers to existential angst. But religion has *always* fulfilled such a role; it is highly unlikely that there is 'more' religion now than in the past in the Third World. Why then do religious groups with political goals *seem* more common? It is possible that they are simply more visible due to the global communications revolution; there are not more of them, just that we can see them - and their consequences - more easily. Smith (1990: 34) claims that 'what has changed in the present situation… is mainly the growing awareness of' manifestations of political religion in the Third World 'by the Western world, and the perception that they might be related to our interests'.

It is important to understand there are numerous historical examples of political religion in the Third World, especially during Western colonization and after it. In the colonial era, Western powers sought to introduce secularism in many cases resulting in a religious backlash. 'Non-western' religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam had periods of intense political activity (Smith, 1990: 34; Haynes 1993, 1995, 1996). In the years immediately after World War I, religion was widely employed in the service of anti-colonial nationalism in Africa, Asia and the Middle East (Engels & Marks, 1994; Furedi 1994; Haynes 1993, 1995, 1996). After World War II, in 1947, Pakistan was founded as a Muslim state, religiously and culturally distinct from Hindu-dominated India, while Buddhism was of great political importance in Burma and Vietnam in the struggle for liberation from colonial rule. During the 1960s in Latin America, Christian democracy and liberation theology were of widespread political significance. In the 1970s and 1980s, political religion was of great importance in the varying contexts of Iran and Nicaragua. What this all points to is that political religion in the Third World has a long history of opposition to unacceptably secular regimes; it is not *ab initio* in the contemporary period, but rather should be see as a series of historical responses to attempts by the state to reduce religion's political influence.

In the immediate aftermath of independence after World War II, Third World modernizing politicians, influenced by Western ideologies, often Western-educated, and impressed by Western countries' order and progress, filled the void left by colonial administrators. However, the secularization process promoted by nationalist leaders did not, for the most part, bring development. Instead, secularization resulted in the attempted transplantation of alien Western institutions, laws, and procedures which aimed to erode, undermine and eventually displace traditional and holistic religio-political systems. The putative modernizers saw their countries as politically, socially and economically backward what was needed was to emulate the secular model of progress pursued so successfully by Western countries. Consequently, political modernizers sought to enforce policies and programmer of modernization - which also, to them, meant secularization. However, within a few years, the credibility and legitimacy of 'secular socialism, secular capitalism, or a mixture of both' (Husain, 1995: 161) was often seriously undermined, as they widely failed to deliver on promises of economic development and national integration.

Poorly implemented modernization programmer also proved incompatible with traditional religious practices, as growing numbers of people left the rural areas for urban locales because of land and employment shortages. While the social, political and economic impact of displacement and urban migration is extensive and complex, it seems highly likely that dislocation of large numbers of people from local communities, and the reforging of personal relations in urban areas, 'opened the way to renegotiation of allegiances to traditional institutions' (Garrard-Burnett, 1996: 102). Where modernization was particularly aggressively pursued - in, for example, India, Thailand, Egypt, Algeria, Brazil - religious backlashes occurred, in protest at unpopular state policies.

In summary, post-colonial governments in the Third World often followed policies of nation-building and expansion of state power, equating secularization with modernization. However, by undermining traditional value systems, often allocating opportunities in highly unequal ways, modernization produced in many ordinary people a deep sense of alienation, stimulating a search for an identity that would give life some purpose and meaning. Many believed they might deal with the unwelcome effects of modernization if they presented their claims for more of the 'national cake' as part of a group. Often the sense of collectivity was rooted in the epitome of traditional community religion. The result was a focus on religiosity, with far-reaching implications for social integration and political stability. This is not a 'return' to religion, but the utilization of religious belief to help pursue the pursuit of social, political and economic goals.

Clearly, for religion to be useful as a defense against secularization, it must be able to focus and coordinate popular dissatisfaction. There must be what Bellah (1965: 194) calls a 'creative tension between religious ideals and the world' where 'transcendent ideals, in tension with empirical reality, have a central place in the religious symbol system, while empirical reality itself is taken very seriously as at least potentially meaningful, valuable, and a valid sphere for religious action'. This is a way of saying that when the secular world seeks to impose on religion's space, at a certain somewhat variable stage it will fight back, aiming to reduce secular influence and to regain its autonomy.

Fighting back against encroaching secularization explains the strong profile of political religion in the Third World. For example, the radicalism of Catholic priests and liberation theology in Latin America, the growth of Islamism in the Middle East and of Sikh separatism in India, are all explicable in this way. Smith (1990 33) claims that overt links between such phenomena are 'weak or nonexistent. Liberation theologians and revolutionary ayatollahs may be aware of each other's existence but have not influenced each other very much'. What he means by this, I take it, is that empirical evidence of direct, personal relationships is absent. But this is not the point virtually all post-colonial Third World countries share the historical desire of political elites to secularize, to modernize, to 'improve' their 'backward' societies. In my view, we do not need to look further for 'causes' of political religion in the Third World it is a common response from those who value their religious milieu and who do not wish to see it undermined by the advance of secularized 'progress'. If people of different religious backgrounds employ broadly similar tactics it does not mean they have had to learn from each other only that they collectively respond in similar ways.

Third World states seek to prevent, or at the least make it very difficult for, political religion to organize. In most Muslim countries, for example, Islamist parties are either proscribed or, at least, infiltrated by state security services. Algeria's Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), the Islamic Tendency Movement of Tunisia, *Hamas* and *Islamic Jihad* in Palestine, the Islamic Party of Kenya, and Tanzania's *Balukta* were all banned in the early 1990s. Others - including the *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* of Indonesia, the *Parti Islam Se Malaysia* and Egypt's Muslim Brothers - are controlled or infiltrated by the state. On the rare occasions when Islamist parties *are* allowed openly to seek electoral support they are often successful. Examples include the FIS electoral victories in 1990/1 and that of Turkey's Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*). The latter won the largest share of the vote (21 per cent) of any party in the 1995 election. Later, in 1996, *Refah* achieved power in coalition with a right-wing secular party, the True Path. Parties like the FIS and *Refah* are electoral popular because offer the disaffected, the alienated and the poverty-stricken a vehicle to pursue beneficial change.

On the other hand, in India, there is strong electoral support for Hindu nationalist parties - and not only from the poor and marginalized. Shiv Sena jointly rules Bombay and Maharashtra state with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Nationally, the BJP has emerged as the largest political party in India, eclipsing the country's traditionally dominant Congress (I) Party. In Buddhist Thailand, on the other hand, a Buddhist reformist party, Santi Asoke, had some electoral success in the early 1990s. The point is that parties like Shiv Sena, the BJP and Santi Asoke all have a wide appeal as viable alternatives to ruling parties often characterized as both corrupt and inefficient. In sum, when Third World people lose faith in the transformatory abilities of secular politicians, religion often appears a viable alternative for the pursuit of beneficial change. It has widely reemerged into the public arena as a mobilizing normative force.

C. Conclusion

My main argument is that the political impact of religion will fall into two main - not necessarily mutually exclusive - categories. First, if the mass of people are not especially religious organized religion will often seek a public role as a result of the belief that society has taken a wrong turn - and needs an injection of religious values to put it back on the straight and narrow. Religion will try to deprivatize itself, so that it has a voice in contemporary debates about social and political direction. The aim is to be a significant factor in political deliberations so that religion's voice is taken into account. Religious leaders seeks support from ordinary people by addressing certain crucial issues, including not only the perceived decline in public and private morality but also the insecurities of life in an undependable market where 'greed and luck appear as effective as work and rational choice' (Comaroff 1994 310). In sum, in the West religion's return to the public sphere is moulded by a range of factors, including the proportion of religious believers in society and the extent to which religious organizations perceive a decline in public standards of morality and compassion.

In Third World societies, on the other hand, most people are already religious believers. Following widespread disappointment at the outcomes of modernizing policies, however, religion often focuses and coordinates opposition, especially - but not exclusively - the poor and ethnic minorities. Attempts by political leaders to pursue modernization lead religious traditions to respond. What this amounts to is that in the Third World in particular religion is often well placed to benefit from any strong societal backlash against the perceived malign effects of modernization.

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