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The governance of religious diversity

Challenges and responses

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Introduction

According to the Pew Research Centre 2015s *The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections*, the role of religion in contemporary societies is all but declining, with global trends pointing at a shrinking percentage of atheists and agnostics. Such predictions are largely based on demographic trends, which see religious families having a higher fertility rate than non-religious ones.[1] In particular, while over the next decades Christians (currently representing almost one-third of the global population) are expected to remain the largest religious group – growing 35 per cent, about the same rate as the global population overall – Muslim communities are projected to grow faster than any other major religion.

Against this backdrop, this Handbook responds to the need for critically investigating how religion and religious diversity is governed today in different world regions, looking at historical trends, current practices, norms, and institutions, and assessing the different ways in which religious minorities and majorities can have their needs and requests satisfied while safeguarding social cohesion.[2]

Europe represents an exception compared to much of the world, including other parts of the 'West' such as the US, since European societies have undergone a long process of secularisation, reflected in the fact that participation in religious activities, including private prayer, has become a minority pursuit, particularly in Western Europe (Berger, 1999; Berger et al., 2008). While Europe is not the only part of the world to have undergone secularisation, it is the only place where this has not resulted from state ideology or coercion but from social and economic change, education, political argument, and the working of liberal democracy (Casanova, 1994). But both religion and religious intolerance are returning to European society and politics through multiple channels. These channels include the dynamics of international migration and the 'new' religions – notably Islam, even though there is a long pedigree of that faith and its adherents in Europe going back many centuries – that accompany such migration. They are also returning through the fervent religious practice of native minorities (for example, Evangelists and other Protestant groups), and the social and political antipathies this has generated among more secularly inclined social majorities. Last but not least, religion is returning to Europe through international relations. Religion in the early twenty-first century

has become an important dimension structuring global governance through perceived hierarchies of 'good', 'bad', 'modern', 'advanced', and 'backward' cultures. Islam has been largely stigmatised in the public arena by the West, with a warped reading that pro- vides part of the rationale for terrorist violence perpetrated a decade ago by Al Qaeda and its related affiliates. Today the stigmatisation of Islam is being violently exploited by insurgent extremist Islamist groups like the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS).

Since the Iranian Revolution in 1979, the contrast and confrontation between an essentialised 'West' and even more essentialised 'Islam' has acquired a global dimension. Symbolically, politically, and militarily this confrontation has continued to grow, gaining strength after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and particularly after 9/11. In the absence of Communism and the Soviet threat, the West has found in Islam and Muslims a contemporary 'Other' against which to affirm the superiority of its cultural and political model (Triandafyllidou, 2001, 2017). At the same time, disenchanted or marginalised or both youth both within Europe and in Middle Eastern, African, and Asian countries have found in extremist interpretations of religion and religiously contextualised terrorist violence a way to express their frustration, disenfranchisement, and struggle for change.

The international confrontation between 'the West' and 'Islam' also finds local expression in Europe. Local integration challenges are interpreted within the global context, with Muslims being stigmatised as 'alien' and 'unfit' for European liberal democracies (Lindekilde et al., 2009; Mouritsen & Olsen, 2013; Triandafyllidou & Kouki, 2013). Some scholars have called this the rise of 'liberal intolerance' (Lindekilde, 2014) or the 'end of tolerance' (Hervick, 2012). In some ways Western European polities have developed forms of moderate secularism – supporting organised religion without an historic national identity controlling or being subordinated by it – which have fostered social cohesion, democracy, and freedom of religion. Yet this has historically been achieved in the context of the presence of a single religion, Christianity. The growing public salience of religion and of religiously inspired radicalisation and violence, and the related 'failure of integration', raise questions about whether models of moderate secularism can further adapt to multi-religious diversity, and what form that adaptation should take.

This Handbook covers different countries in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), South and Southeast Asia, and Australia to enquire in the historical trends, policies, and practices in these regions and compare with each other and with European approaches. The book thus seeks to highlight the rich experiences outside Europe in places where religion is closely related to politics and occupies an important position in public life.

Beyond secularism or adopting multiple secularisms?

This Handbook offers a sociological reflection on what can be viable forms of governing religion and religious diversity in a large variety of countries and world regions. This country-specific and comparative (in the last chapter) discussion of how different countries seek to govern religion and accommodate religious diversity feeds into an analytical reflection on what is the normative basis for state-religion relations (see also Modood & Sealy, 2019, GREASE concept paper 1.1). The case studies provided in this Handbook lend themselves to an analytical discussion that is also iterative with a view of identifying appropriate versions or models of secularism that can function in a variety of contexts (Modood & Thompson, 2018). The analytical and normative debate on how to govern religion and religious diversity in Europe has been dominated by the notion of political secularism. The core idea of political secularism is the idea of political autonomy, namely, that politics or the state has a *raison d'être* of its own and should not be subordinated to religious authority, religious purposes, or religious reasons.

This is a one-way type of autonomy. Secularism may also involve a two- way autonomy, where there is some government control of religion, some interference in religion, some support for religion, and some cooperation with (selected) religious organisations and religious purposes. Such state control and support, though, must not compromise the autonomy of politics. In other words, it must be largely justifiable in political terms, not just religious reasons, and it must not restrict (but may support) political authority and state action (Modood, 2012).

Political secularism is not necessarily democratic (see also Bader, 2007). In the West it has largely been conjoined with liberal democracy (but not necessarily, as the USSR illustrates), and it has been linked to a two-way mutual autonomy written into relevant constitutional arrangements so that both state and religion enjoy their independence. This mutual auton- omy is what Alfred Stepan (2000) calls 'twin tolerations'. Mutual autonomy – but not strict separation – has historically emerged as the liberal democratic version of secularism and is the one that is most widespread today. For such secularists, religious freedom is one of the most essential and cherished political values. It must be noted though that in Muslim majority countries such as Turkey, Algeria, or Egypt secularism often has an anti-democratic, anti-popular character, but may be cast as more accommodating of minorities than alternatives in order to promote support for secularism.

Taylor (2010, also 2014 discussed by Bilgrami, 2014) has suggested that secularism is, at its core, really about 'managing diversity'. While the importance of secularism for managing religious diversity should not be under-appreciated, it should be noted that even if there was no religious diversity in a country or in the world, if only one religion was present, there would still be a question about the relationship between religion and politics, and 'political autonomy' would still be a suitable answer. Moreover, secularism is not an answer to questions about *any* kind of diversity; it arises specifically in relation to the power and authority of religion, and the challenge it may pose to political rule or to, for instance, equality among citizens (Bilgrami, 2014).

Indeed, one can go further and say that secularism and religion are correlative concepts. If there was no religion in the world, not merely that it had passed away, but if it had never existed in the first place, so that there was no concept of religion, then secularism would have no reference point and there would be no concept of political secularism. In that sense, secularism is a secondary concept, dependent on the concept of religion. However, once there is a concept of secularism – with advocates, promoters, or indeed critiques – then it engages into a dialectical relationship with religion. In other words, secularism also intellectually and politically redefines religion to suit secularist values and purposes (Asad, 2003). What we regard today as religion (an 'inner life', a 'belief ', a private matter) in secularist countries is a much more socially restricted set of activities, relationships, and forms of authority than was the case before secularism's widespread adoption, or than what prevails in non-secularist countries today.

The political secularism adopted in the majority of European countries is a moderate one (Modood, 2010, 2019) which allows for privileged state-religion relations in line with the history and contemporary experience of each of these countries. Thus, for instance, in Germany, the Catholic and Protestant Churches are constitutionally recognised corporations, on whose behalf the federal government collects voluntary taxes and grants large amounts of additional public money. In Belgium, a number of religions have constitutional entitlements and a national Council of Religions enjoys the support of the monarch. Norway, Denmark, and England each have an 'established' Church; Sweden had one until 2000, and Finland has two (Stepan, 2011; cf. Koenig, 2009).

The UK also has two state recognised national churches, the Church of England and the Church of Scotland, but the latter is independent of the UK state, including of the Scottish state in which it plays no formal role. Yet, it would be difficult to dispute that these countries are not among the leading secular states in the world. They adopt, however, a moderate or flexible form of secularism.

The question arises as to whether frameworks of secularism, both 'rigid' secularism (Bouchard & Taylor, 2008) such as that adopted by France in the form of *laïcité* and 'moderate' secularism (Modood, 2010) such as that of most of the European countries reviewed in this volume, are adequate for addressing the issues raised by religious minorities. The challenge is that these secularism models invariably adopt the liberal language of choice. While they help to secure freedom of belief and conscience for all, their attitude towards religious practices of minorities is often ambiguous, if not outrightly hostile. Secular states can be particularly reluctant to change existing public norms to accommodate the practices of post-migration minorities, and even when they have done so, they have considered them as if they were a set of lifestyle preferences or freely chosen beliefs. In this way, they have tended to ignore that religious observances are closely tied to a person's inner sense of dignity and respect, a constitutive element of their very self, and hence experienced as something more than merely a question of freedom of 'choice' (Mahajan, 2017).

To underscore this point, we will take an example from India (Mahajan, 2017). In Jawaharlal Nehru University (like many other public institutions) there are no separate prayer rooms. This does not mean that there are no devout religious believers at the university. Religious believers who wish to offer prayers during the day assemble (among other places) on the sixth floor of the university library. Administrations have changed and so have librarians, but the practice of keeping a little space clear and clean for offering prayers is a practice that has continued. While there is no formal notification for this, the concerned authorities understand that several Muslim students would need to offer prayers at specific times during the day. They also recognise that not accommodating this need for religious worship is likely to be read, by both those wishing to offer prayers and those who do not observe the fast, as hostility to the community as a whole. For this reason, practice-related needs are often accommodated. The fact that this is a practice involving, by and large, worship in accordance with religious norms means an extra effort is made to accommodate the concerns of the devout.

Similar accommodation is not made, however, for 'choice-driven' activities. It is highly unlikely that space would be provided in the library for, say, table tennis players who have no other place to practise and are strongly committed to winning the upcoming tournament. The point is that matters of religion are often treated differently from other kinds of actions in India. To some extent this is because religion continues to play an important role in individual and social life, but also because religious and cultural diversity are values recognised and inscribed in the Constitution. The framers of the Indian Constitution did not merely envision a 'secular' polity, where the state would not be aligned with any religion and everyone would enjoy freedom of conscience and belief; rather they conceived of a state where different religious and cultural communities would, to a considerable extent, be able to live in accordance with their beliefs and practices. It is this commitment to diversity that has made the crucial difference and encouraged greater willingness to accommodate religious practices of the minorities as well as of the majority. In the chapters of this book we can find similar considerations in Indonesia and Malaysia where the primacy of religion is recognised to the extent that one cannot not have a religion. Indeed, non-European countries draw our attention to the importance of religion and religious diversity as a socio-cultural asset (Mahajan, 2017).

The variety of country perspectives and approaches reviewed in this Handbook allows us also to appreciate that secularism can only be highly contextual. It takes a different shape depending on the state traditions and political culture of a society as well as of which religion or religions it is contoured around – secular and religion being correlative, mutually informing concepts and mutually shaping each other in varied permutations. This means that we are talking of 'multiple secularisms' (Taylor, 1998; Casanova, 2009; Stepan, 2010; Calhoun et al., 2011).

Taking this point further, we recognise that multiple secularisms are an aspect of the wider theoretical and sociological understanding that the very phenomenon of modernity has to be understood in terms of 'multiple modernities' (Eisenstadt, 2000). This approach rejects the association of modernisation with Westernisation, that to become modern all so- cieties must follow the path of the West and become like the West. Eisenstadt recognises that Western modes of modernity continue to 'enjoy historical precedence' and serve as 'a basic reference point for others', but the last half-century has made plain that 'Western patterns of modernity are not the only "authentic" modernities' available for concrete societal expres- sion (ibid.). Rather, different parts of the world are modernising in their own ways and this refers not least to developments concerning religion, secularity, diversity, and governance.

In probing different models of governing religion and accommodating religious diversity in the different world regions and country cases analysed in this volume, we question whether secularism should be seen as a complete (or less complete) form of separation of religious institutions and state or as a form of reciprocal toleration and reciprocal autonomy and enquire into what could be alternative models for a smooth governance of religious diversity within liberal democracies where both majority and minority religions share a sense of legitimacy.

This volume aims at bringing together a multi-disciplinary and innovative perspective on religious diversity governance. The role that religion plays in the public space has been a key issue in contemporary European cohesion policies for some time, and its relevance has increased with recent migratory flows that bring with them the need to accommodate new forms of religious diversity (Bramadat & Koenig, 2009). However, because of their multifaceted and complex dynamics, relations between the state and religious institutions have been studied mainly at a national or sub-national level rather than as part of an effort to understand what similarities and differences exist among various countries and world regions.

This has prevented a comprehensive understanding of current trends for action in the challenging processes of religious diversity management. This book's perspective is that there is a need to transcend the current conception of Europe an insular space in favour of an understanding of religious diversity governance as a nodal point in multi-level and transnational exchanges. The key objective of the volume is therefore to analyse the dissonances, overlaps, and synergies that characterise the design and implementation of policies aimed at religious communities above and beyond the European sphere or Australia, looking at under-studied models both in Eastern Europe (Leustean, 2014) and most importantly in South Asia, South- east Asia, and the MENA region (Triandafyllidou & Modood, 2017).

While building on recent research on religion and politics (Haynes, 2009; Muck et al., 2014) and on the governance of religious diversity (Triandafyllidou & Modood, 2017; Furseth, 2018) this Handbook provides for a wider overview of different approaches to state- religion relations. The chapters included in this volume also investigate how religion relates to national or ethnic identity both historically in terms of nation/state formation and symbolically as one of the quintessential elements for identifying with (or against) the nation.

The contents of this volume

Our analytical and empirical work for each chapter starts with a thorough desk research and analysis of secondary data: related studies, legal texts, policy documents/grey materials, statistical data on economics and demographics, and political statements and interviews of key leading personalities including politicians, religious leaders, civil society stakeholders, minority representatives, journalists, and academics, as quoted in the media or available through their own web sites. In some countries selected stakeholders have been interviewed to further enrich and assess the secondary materials analysed. This was particularly the case in countries where secondary materials were scant. Each chapter includes both qualitative and quantitative data and brings together different disciplinary approaches, notably political theory, international relations, sociology, ethnic studies, and economics.

While addressing very different contexts, populations, and processes, all chapters follow a similar outline, which allows for comparability. Each chapter starts by presenting the socio-demographic profiles of the population and particularly the existence of different religious groups and the extent to which this is a result of recent immigration or a long-standing historical presence of such minorities. This is by itself no small challenge as most countries do not keep official records of religious affiliation data in order to protect the privacy of their citizens and residents. The second section in each chapter investigates the legal and institutional regulatory framework concerning religion in each country, looking notably at the place that religion is given in the Constitution as well as at the major laws and policies regarding religious matters and regulating state-religion relations. Attention is paid to both the letter of the law and its implementation. Thus, our focus is to uncover not only what is officially foreseen in each country but also what happens in reality, whether minorities have access to their rights or what hurdles they face in doing so. Each chapter then provides a brief history of the role of religion in the specific state and nation formation, and how religious minorities-majority relations evolved and how the specific framework of governance was formed. This gives us the opportunity to highlight which laws and policies are actually an expansion of the religious majority rights to those of minorities or whether new policies have been developed in recognition of the changing demographics of a given country. The concluding comparative chapter offers an overview of how the different chapters speak to each other, comparing the different factors that are at play in state-religion relations and the governance of religious diversity among and within the different world regions.

The book is organised in six parts corresponding to the world regions covered: Europe (subdivided into western, southern, south-eastern, and eastern Europe/Russia), the MENA region, South and Southeast Asia and the Asia Pacific.

We have selected to cover different macro-regions within Europe with a view of going beyond the usual focus on Western European countries (for example, France, Germany, or the UK) that are characterised by the highest levels of post-migration diversity, related conflicts, and, of course, public policies to address these issues. Our aim thus is to highlight and compare the experiences of Western Europe – which are already quite varied in terms of state-religion relations, degree of secularism, and type of support to majority and minority religions – with those of southern Europe (the countries that have become immigration hosts during the last 25 years and where religion played an important role in defining national identity) and with the different sets of post-Communist countries – those in south-eastern Europe with relatively large native Muslim and minority Christian populations – and those in central-eastern Europe with a largely secular or religiously indifferent approach and a dominant nominally Christian majority. With the aim of considering the post-Communist

legacy in Europe's easternmost corner, we also include Russia, which is a global player and has dealt with radicalisation and violence in its war against Chechnya and the related terrorist attempts.

Our coverage expands also to the south and east to include the historical and political experience of the MENA region, notably Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco. These are all predominantly Muslim countries with different degrees of religious rule/ moderate secularism. These countries have been characterised by important socio-political upheavals related to what is known as the Arab Spring, albeit in different directions. Thus while Turkey has been verging towards authoritarianism and a further instrumentalisation of religion in the public sphere by the political leadership, Tunisia and Morocco have followed the opposite path of democratisation and moderate secularism; in Egypt, the overthrow of Islamist president Mohammed Morsi ended the 2011–2013 experiment which was characterised by far more pluralism than hitherto or hence. Lebanon retains its multi-communal arrangements, albeit faced with many challenges and political instability. In addition, four out of the five countries presented have been faced with increased radicalisation and ethno-religious violence both against Muslims and Christians of different denominations and have reacted with different degrees of state radicalisation and violence. The four eastern and the four southern EU neighbours allow us to put the EU countries' experience in its historical and geopolitical context (that is inseparable from these two regions).

We then introduce in the regions covered, a fourth 'double' region, notably South Asia and Southeast Asia. The reason for including South Asia and Southeast Asia is to investigate state-religion relations and models of secularism as well as trends of radicalisation in countries with a Muslim majority population, like Indonesia and Malaysia, and in a country of Hindu majority with a large Muslim population (India) with a view to exploring how they have organised their state-religion relations beyond European models of secularism and in view of a deep respect for the role that religion plays in people's lives. We also find this region particularly important as it has also experienced important religious violence events including both bomb explosions and public riots against religious minorities.

Last but not least, we have included Australia because it is an immigrant nation and as such different from all European countries, while at the same time sharing a lot in common with Western European countries as regards a common perception of belonging to the 'West' as well as the close ties between Australia and the UK.

Contributions to this book are organised in 23 country-specific chapters that are historically contextualised by taking into account national and macro-regional frameworks. We critically review the models of state-religion relations and governance of cultural diversity in four macro-regions within Europe.

By looking into state-religion relations and governance of religion/religious diversity in these regions beyond Europe, we gain insights into predominantly Muslim countries (Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Turkey, Indonesia, Malaysia), countries with pronounced historical religious diversity (India and Lebanon), and into a predominantly migrant pluralist nation (Australia). These insights will provide a basis for re-thinking European models and learning from the experiences of governing religious diversity in other socio-economic and geopolitical contexts – contexts shaped by the Christian tradition (such as Australia) as well as non-Christian majority traditions (for example, in MENA or South and Southeast Asia).

Building on the unique variety and complexity of the 23 country chapters in this book, the concluding chapter offers a comparative overview of their approaches to state-religion relations. We look at the different factors at play in state-religion relations and the governance of religious diversity in different countries, comparing among and within the different world regions.

First of all, we look at the socio-demographic profile of the different countries assessing the size and complexity of the challenge as levels of religious diversity vary greatly from a largely mono-religious Lithuania, for instance, to the world's largest and most diverse democracy, notably India. We discuss the relationship between religion and state formation and the national self-concept to asses to what extent religious minorities are included in the national narrative or are excluded from it. Based on the analysis presented in the country chapters, we discuss the institutional make up and compare among countries as to their main principles and practices for regulating religion. We look at whether a country privileges mainly freedom of or freedom from religion and, in the case of the former, the extent to which religious minorities suffer discrimination or disadvantage. Last but not least, we compare the politics of governing religious diversity in different countries and look at how politicised religion is.

Notes

1 The complete report is available at https://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projections-2010-2050/

2 This book is based on analytical and empirical research conducted within the framework of the EU-funded Horizon 2020 project: **GREASE** – Radicalisation, Secularism and the Governance of Religion: Bringing together European and Asian Perspectives (http://grease.eui.eu, contract no.770640).

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