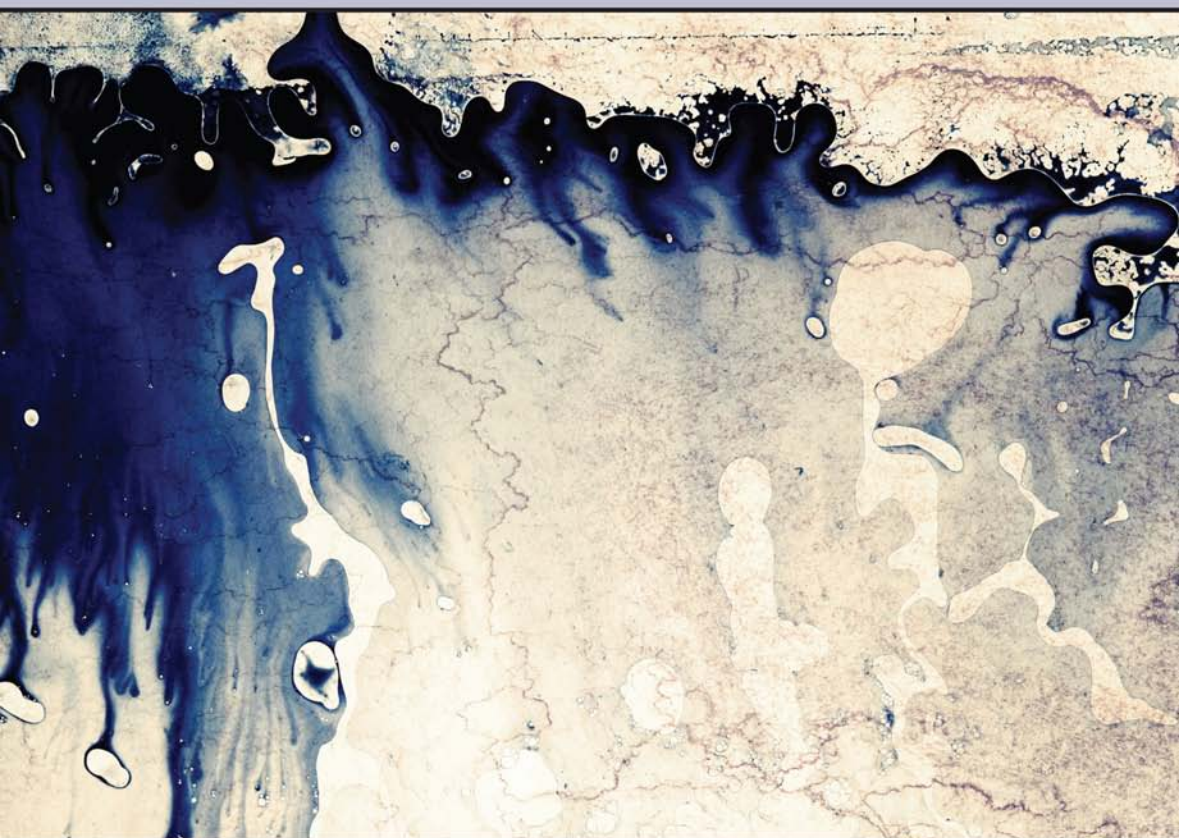


ROUTLEDGE STUDIES IN **RELIGION AND POLITICS**

RELIGION, POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Selected essays



JEFFREY HAYNES



RELIGION, POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

‘Comprehensive, concise, and accessible, this book by one of the world’s leading authorities is required reading for anyone interested in the ‘return’ of religion to global politics and international relations.’

Giorgio Shani, *International Christian University, Japan.*

‘Jeffrey Haynes is one of the most senior and insightful scholars of religion and politics. This collection of essays is an excellent example of both the depth and breadth of his knowledge on the interaction between the religious and the political across the world.’

Jonathan Fox, *Bar-Ilan University, Israel.*

‘Jeffrey Haynes is among the leading scholars in the research about religion and politics. This essential book includes his most relevant contributions to the field.’

Luca Ozzano, *Assistant Professor of Political Science, University of Torino, Italy.*

A leading authority in the discipline, Jeffrey Haynes has contributed to many of the most significant debates in the fields of religion and politics, and religion and international relations in the last twenty years. This book brings together many of his most influential essays, offering a comprehensive analysis of religious actors and their political goals.

In recent years, scholars have identified a range of religious actors with a variety of political goals. The aim of this collection is to identify and examine political activities of selected religious actors in both domestic and international contexts. The introductory chapter sets the scene for the collection, providing a clear understanding of *why, how and when* religious actors act politically both within and between countries. Over the course of fifteen essays, Jeffrey Haynes presents a survey of the interaction of religion and politics, both domestically and internationally, in relation to a variety of issues, and draws the findings together in a new conclusion written for the volume.

This work will be of great interest to the growing number of scholars, students and practitioners internationally who work on religion and politics, in both domestic and international contexts.

Jeffrey Haynes is Associate Dean, Faculty of Law, Governance and International Relations at London Metropolitan University, UK.

Routledge Studies in Religion and Politics

Edited by Jeffrey Haynes

London Metropolitan University, UK

This series aims to publish high quality works on the topic of the resurgence of political forms of religion in both national and international contexts. This trend has been especially noticeable in the post-Cold War era, that is, since the late 1980s. It has affected all the 'world religions', including Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism in various parts of the world such as the Americas, Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, South and Southeast Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa.

The series welcomes books that use a variety of approaches to the subject, drawing on scholarship from political science, international relations, security studies and contemporary history.

Books in the series explore these religions, regions and topics both within and beyond the conventional domain of 'church-state' relations to include the impact of religion on politics, conflict and development, including the late Samuel Huntington's controversial – yet influential – thesis about 'clashing civilizations'.

In sum, the overall purpose of the book series is to provide a comprehensive survey of what is currently happening in relation to the interaction of religion and politics, both domestically and internationally, in relation to a variety of issues.

Politics and the Religious Imagination

Edited by John Dyck, Paul Rowe and Jens Zimmermann

Christianity and Party Politics

Keeping the faith

Martin H. M. Steven

Religion, Politics and International Relations

Selected essays

Jeffrey Haynes

RELIGION, POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Selected essays

Jeffrey Haynes

First published 2011
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2011 Jeffrey Haynes

The right of Jeffrey Haynes to be identified as author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patent Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Haynes, Jeffrey.

Religion, politics, and international relations : selected essays / Jeffrey Haynes.

p. cm. -- (Routledge studies in religion and politics)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Religion and politics. 2. Religion and international relations. I. Title.

BL65.P7H38 2011

322'.1--dc22

2010043234

ISBN: 978-0-415-61780-2 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-0-415-61781-9 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-0-203-81863-3 (ebk)

Typeset in Bembo by
GreenGate Publishing Services, Tonbridge, Kent

CONTENTS

<i>List of illustrations</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>viii</i>
1 Introduction	1
2 Religion, secularization and politics: a postmodern conspectus	12
3 Religious fundamentalism and politics	31
4 Religion and politics: what is the impact of September 11?	46
5 Religion and democratization in Africa	57
6 Religion, ethnicity and civil war in Africa: the cases of Uganda and Sudan	77
7 The political and social context of intercivilizational conflict and the possibilities of peace building	91
8 Conflict, conflict resolution and peace building: the role of religion in Mozambique, Nigeria and Cambodia	107
9 Religion and international relations: what are the issues?	127
10 Religion and foreign policy making in the USA, India and Iran: towards a research agenda	138

vi Contents

11	Politics, identity and religious nationalism in Turkey: from Atatürk to the AKP	159
12	Transnational religious actors and international politics	173
13	Transnational religious actors and international order	189
14	Religion and a human rights culture in America	211
15	Al-Qaeda: ideology and action	222
16	Islamic militancy in East Africa	236
17	Conclusion	254
	<i>Notes</i>	266
	<i>Bibliography</i>	273
	<i>Index</i>	292

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figures

2.1	The triadic relationship of state, society and religion	15
-----	---	----

Tables

6.1	Civil wars and armed conflicts in Africa, 1963–2005	78
6.2	Ethnic and religious fragmentation in Africa	80
8.1	Ethnic and religious fragmentation in Africa, Asia and Latin America	113
10.1	Religion and foreign policy in the USA	143
11.1	Muslims' 'average negativity to Westerners'	165
11.2	Turks' rating of Christians, Muslims and Jews	166
13.1	Religion and foreign policy in the United States	195
16.1	Islamic NGOs in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania alleged to support Islamic militancy and terrorism	241

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work in this collection has been published previously in a variety of different forms. We would like to thank the publishers for granting permission to use the following copyright material:

- ‘Transnational Religious Actors and International Order’, *Perspectives*, 17 (2) (December 2009), 43–70. Reproduced with permission.
- ‘Religion and International Relations: What Are the Issues?’, *International Politics*, 41 (3) (September 2004), 451–62. Reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan.
- ‘The Political and Social Context of Intercivilisational Conflict and the Possibilities of Peace Building’, *The Israel Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 1 (1) Special issue, Ben Molloy, guest editor: ‘Intercivilizational Conflict: Can It Be Moderated?’, Spring 2009, 29–48. Reproduced with permission.

We would like to thank Taylor and Francis Ltd, (www.informaworld.com) for granting permission to use the following copyright material, reprinted by permission of the publisher:

- ‘Religion, Secularization and Politics: A Postmodern Conspectus’, *Third World Quarterly*, 18 (4) (September 1997), 709–28.
- ‘Religion and Politics: What Is the Impact of September 11?’, *Contemporary Politics*, 9 (1) (March 2003), 7–15.
- ‘Popular Religion and Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa’, *Third World Quarterly*, 16 (1) (March 1995), 89–108.
- ‘Religion, Ethnicity, and Civil War in Africa: The Cases of Uganda and Sudan’, *The Round Table*, 96 (390) (June 2007), 305–17.
- ‘Conflict, Conflict Resolution and Peace-Building: The Role of Religion in Mozambique, Nigeria and Cambodia’, *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 47 (1) (February 2009), 52–75.
- ‘Religion and Foreign Policy Making in the USA, India and Iran: Towards a Research Agenda’, *Third World Quarterly*, 29 (1) (February 2008), 143–65.

- 'Politics, Identity and Religious Nationalism in Turkey: From Atatürk to the AKP', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 64 (3) (June 2010), 313–28.
- 'Transnational Religious Actors and International Politics', *Third World Quarterly*, 22 (2) (April 2001), 143–58.
- Religion and a Human Rights Culture in America', *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, 6 (2) (June 2008), 73–82.
- 'Al-Qaeda: Ideology and Action', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 8 (2) (June 2005), 177–91.
- 'Islamic Militancy in East Africa', *Third World Quarterly*, 26 (8), (December 2005), 1321–39.
- 'Religious Fundamentalism and Politics', in L. Ridgeon (ed.), *Major Religions of the World: Past, Present and Post-Modern*, London: Curzon, 2003, pp. 321–75.

Jeffrey Haynes

Every effort has been made to contact copyright holders for their permission to reprint material in this book. The publishers would be grateful to hear from any copyright holder who is not here acknowledged and will undertake to rectify any errors or omissions in future editions of this book.

1

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, scholars have identified a range of religious actors with a variety of political goals. The purpose of this book is to identify and examine recent political activities of a range of selected religious actors in both domestic and international contexts. The book's starting point is also an obvious fact: around the world, numerous religious actors now affect political outcomes in various ways. Both non-state and state religious actors – including, in relation to the first category, various Islamist groups and the Roman Catholic Church and, regarding the second, the government of Iran – have had significant political impacts in and between countries around the world.

This introductory chapter aims to set the scene for the collection: a wide ranging *tour d'horizon* of religious actors with political goals in both domestic and international contexts. The aim is to provide a clear understanding of *why*, *how* and *when* selected religious actors act politically both within and between countries. Overall, a key question on which the various contributions to the book focus is: *Why, how and when do selected religious actors seek to influence political outcomes both domestically and internationally?*

Recent decades have seen widespread involvement of religious actors in politics, especially but not exclusively in parts of the developing world. In this context, the book has twin foci: the relationship between religion and politics and the relationship between religion and international relations. This introductory chapter sets out the concerns of the book and is structured around the following themes. First, I define and discuss the concept of religion and examine its contemporary political and social salience. Second, I examine the notion of religious fundamentalism, not least because it is often associated with religious competition and conflict both within and between countries. Third, I survey examples of religious competition and conflict in the developing world

in order to see what impact they have on political outcomes there. Fourth, I consider the extent to which, after 11 September 2001 – that is, the epochal day that the USA was attacked by al-Qaeda terrorists, resulting in the loss of nearly 3,000 lives – international relations has changed by focusing on the recent and current involvement of religion in world politics. In sum, the book examines the recent importance of both domestic and international political issues involving religion in various parts of the world.

Where did all this start? Why are we concerned with it? It seems quaint to think that three or four decades ago issues concerning religion and politics, and religion and international relations were noticeable by their absence in public and policy debates. Today, things are very different, with many issues relating to religion and politics, and religion and international relations in the public eye. Not least, we can note that today ‘quality’ – that is, ‘broadsheet’ – newspapers very often report stories, both from the UK and abroad, that highlight the importance of news stories characterized by the interaction of religious and political dimensions both at home and abroad. For example, regarding the latter, a recurring theme is widespread Islamic militancy or ‘fundamentalism’, particularly in the Arab Middle East. It sometimes seems that the entire region is polarized between Jews and Muslims – both over the status of holy sites claimed by the two sides and the political and economic position of the mostly Muslim Palestinians.

In Europe, on the other hand, many countries are now discussing the position of Muslims in what were in most cases until recently traditionally Christian environments. This underlines that it is not ‘only’ international relations that is consistently informed by debate about the public role(s) of Islam. It is also the case that many countries’ domestic politics, especially but not exclusively in the Middle East, have long been significantly informed by the interaction of religion and politics. For example, for a decade from the early 1990s Algeria endured a civil war between ‘Islamic fundamentalist’ or ‘Islamist’ rebels and the state. The roots of this conflict went back to a contested election and, more generally, highlight the often problematic political relationship between religious and secular actors in the Middle East. In December 1991 Algeria held legislative elections which most independent observers characterized as among the freest ever held in the Middle East. The following January, however, Algeria’s armed forces seized power to prevent what was likely to be a decisive victory in the elections by an Islamist party, the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS; English: Islamic Salvation Front). The assumption was that if the FIS achieved power it would then erode or dissolve Algeria’s newly refreshed democratic institutions. In London *The Economist* posed the question, ‘What is the point of an experiment in democracy if the first people it delivers to power are intent on dismantling it?’ (2 January 1992). The answer might well be: ‘This is the popular will, it must be respected – whatever the outcome.’ Instead, Algeria’s military leaders imposed their preference. The FIS was summarily banned, thousands of its supporters were incarcerated, and between

150,000 and 200,000 Algerians died in the subsequent civil war which only came to an end more than ten years later. Even now, nearly twenty years after the initial outburst of violence, Algeria still endures intermittent attacks from Islamist rebels, unhappy about the nature of the political system in the country.

It is worth noting at this point that there is no obvious reason why political Islam cannot compete for power democratically. Political Islam refers to a political movement with often diverse characteristics that at various times has included elements of many other political movements, while simultaneously adapting the religious views of Islamic fundamentalism or Islamism. In both the Palestinian authority and Iraq in recent years, as well as in Turkey, Islamic political parties have gained power either alone (Hamas in the Palestinian authority and the Justice and Development Party or AKP in Turkey) or as part of a ruling coalition (present-day Iraq, i.e. once the politicians have sorted out how to share power after a close and closely fought election in 2010). In all of these examples Islamic political actors were willing to play by the democratic rules of the game.

Elsewhere in the developing world, Islamists are also politically active. For example, in Africa, Nigeria sometimes appears politically polarized between Muslim and Christian forces, Somalia – a fragmented and failed state – may eventually have an Islamist government, while Sudan has also experienced long-running, not yet completed, political travails between Muslims and non-Muslims. In all these cases Islamists have not sought to use the ballot box to achieve power; but then again that particular option has not been available as a result of constitutional restrictions or constraints or wider political factors.

But it is not only Muslims who pursue political goals related to religion. For example, in officially secular India, growth in militant Hinduism was highlighted by, but not confined to an incident at the Babri Masjid mosque at Ayodhya in 1992, which saw a Hindu mob destroy an old Muslim mosque. This incident was instrumental in transforming the country's political landscape. The mosque, according to militant Hindus, was built on the birthplace of the Hindu god of war, Rama. As long ago as 1950, the mosque was closed down by the Indian government, for militant Hindus wanted to build a Hindu temple there. Since then, Hindu militants or 'fundamentalists', whose primary political organization is the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), have grown to political prominence. From 1996 to mid 2004, the BJP was the dominant party in three ruling coalition governments. Although at the current time (late 2010) political power is held by the secular Congress Party government it is likely that at some future stage the BJP will regain power, as it remains a political force to be reckoned with. In addition, in Israel, the country's politics are heavily affected by what Jewish political parties do and say. Although they never acquire power on their own, such parties have been important players in Israel's political system for decades. Finally, Christians have also been active politically in various parts of the world with variable political results. For example, the Roman Catholic church was a leading player in the turn to

democracy in Latin America and elsewhere in the 1980s and 1990s, while in the USA the Christian Right has been an important social and political influence for decades. Overall, we can conclude that: (1) The last three or four decades have seen widespread involvement of religion in politics, especially in many countries in the developing world; (2) Several religious traditions have experienced increased political involvement; and (3) Religion and democracy do not always seem compatible, although religious actors from various religious persuasions have undoubtedly contributed to recent democratization in various parts of the world.

Religion and politics

Before proceeding, it is necessary to define 'religion'. Throughout the chapters of this book, religion has two analytically distinct, yet related meanings. In a *spiritual* sense, religion pertains in three ways to models of social and individual behaviour that help believers organize their everyday lives. First, it is to do with the idea of *transcendence*, that is, it relates to supernatural realities. Second, it is concerned with *sacredness*, that is, a system of language and practice that organizes the world in terms of what is deemed holy. Third, it refers to *ultimacy*: it relates people to the ultimate conditions of existence.

In another, *material*, sense, religious beliefs can motivate individuals and groups to act in pursuit of social or political goals. Very few – if any – religious groups have an *absolute* lack of concern for at least *some* social and political issues. Consequently, religion can be 'a mobiliser of masses, a controller of mass action ... an excuse for repression [or] an ideological basis for dissent' (Calvert and Calvert 2001: 140). In many countries, religion remains an important source of basic value orientations; and this may well have social and/or political connotations.

A further point needs to be made regarding the relationship between religion and ethnicity, not least because they are often conflated. As several of the chapters in this book make plain, for example, Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8, religion is a very common component of ethnic identity. For instance in India, Sikh ethnic identity is usually defined in terms of adherence to a common religion. It could seem then that ethnicity is the overarching concept and religious identification is one subtype. However, there are situations where people sharing a single religion are divided by ethnicity, as for example in Pakistan, Afghanistan or east Africa where people share a common Islamic faith but are ethnically divided on the basis of both region and language. Moreover, appeals to religion often seek to transcend particular local or ethnic identities in the name of a supposedly universal ideal. It is wisest, therefore, to see ethnicity and religion as terms whose potential meaning and content overlap but remain distinct.

But is there 'more' religion around now compared to the past? A few years ago, an American commentator, George Weigel, claimed that there is what he calls an 'unsecularization of the world', that is, a global religious revitalization.¹

For Weigel, this is manifested in a worldwide resurgence of religious ideas and religion-influenced social movements that are not confined to one faith or a few countries. If Weigel is correct – and we should note that not all interested scholars agree with him – how can we explain this unexpected development? To start with, we need to note that no simple, clear-cut, one-size-fits-all, reason or theoretical explanation covers all cases. On the other hand, most scholars would accept that religious actors' undoubtedly widespread social and/or political activities are linked to the impact of modernization. I understand modernization as the prolonged period of historically unprecedented, diverse, massive change, characterized by urbanization, industrialization and influential technological developments that people around the world have experienced in recent times. Modernization appears not only to undermine traditional value systems but also to allocate opportunities – both within and between countries – in highly unequal ways. The result is that many people feel both disorientated and troubled and, as a result, some at least (re)turn to religion for solace and comfort. In doing so, many seek a new or renewed sense of identity, something to give their lives greater meaning and purpose.

A second, although linked, explanation for apparent religious resurgence moves away from the specific impact of modernization to point to a more generalized 'atmosphere of crisis' characteristic of the times in which we live. A key factor is said to be widespread popular disillusion with the abilities of political leaders to lead their countries in ways that appeal to the mass of ordinary people. Popular disappointment and disillusionment can easily feed into perceptions that these leaders hold power illegitimately – a sense bolstered when leaders resort to political oppression to gain or retain political power. Adding to the sense of crisis is widespread popular belief that society's traditional morals and values are being seriously undermined by the corrosive effects of modernization – including, globalization and secularization – which has the effect of reducing or even removing religion's influence from the public realm. These circumstances are said to provide a fertile milieu for many people's 'return' to religion.

As a result, it seems likely that the influence of religion will not be seen 'only' in relation to personal issues. Above, we noted what might be called the *political* effects of the 'return of religion'. Most countries now have highly politicized religious groups, institutions and movements that have emerged – or adopted a higher profile – in recent years. Such actors are found in many different faiths and sects and what they have in common is a desire to change domestic, and in some cases international, arrangements, so as to (re)instate religion as a central societal and political influence. They adopt a variety of tactics to achieve their goals. Some confine themselves to the realm of legitimate political protest, seeking reform or change via the ballot box; others may resort to violence and terror to pursue their objectives.

Some commentators are not convinced by the argument that there is a widespread, even global religious revival and revitalization. They contend

instead that rather than a religious resurgence per se, what we are seeing is greater visibility today of politicized religion compared to the past. In other words, politicized religion is now more visible – largely as a consequence of the global communications revolution, a key component of a wider development: globalization. In other words, religion is not a novel political actor, so much as a stubbornly persistent one of which we are now more consistently aware than we were a few years ago. Thus, what has changed in recent times is growing awareness that there are increasing manifestations of political religion in and between many countries, and that they can make a difference to our lives. Such perceptions are no doubt increased by advances in communications technology and availability, an important component of globalization, which is itself a multifaceted process of change, significantly affecting not only governments but also communities and individuals. Religious actors are not of course exempted from globalization's influence and some become skilled at using the media to spread their message. Academic and policy discussions of religion and globalization often highlight trends towards cultural pluralism² partly as a result of globalization, examining how various religions respond to its impact. Some believers react 'positively', accepting or even endorsing pluralism, including some Christian and Muslim ecumenical movements. Others emphasize inter-religious differences, sometimes confronting non-believers in attempts to preserve their particular values from being eroded (further) by globalization. So-called religious fundamentalists – with examples drawn from, inter alia, the Christian, Muslim and Jewish faiths – can be noted in this regard.

But they are not *sui generis*. In the developing world, various religious traditions – including Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam – all experienced periods of pronounced political activity in the first half of the twentieth century in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. During the first half of the twentieth century, religion was frequently used in the service of anti-colonial nationalism, a major facet of emerging national identity as a key component of burgeoning indigenous opposition to alien rule. In various Muslim countries, such as Algeria, Egypt and Indonesia, Islamic consciousness was the defining ideology of nationalist movements during this time. In addition, immediately after the Second World War, in 1947, Pakistan traumatically emerged from India as a Muslim state, religiously and culturally distinct from Hindu-majority India. A decade later, Buddhism was politically important, inter alia, in Burma, Sri Lanka and Vietnam. In the 1960s in Latin America, both Christian democracy – the application of Christian precepts to politics – and liberation theology – a radical Christian ideology employing Jesus' teachings as a basis of a demand for greater socio-economic justice for the poor – were politically consequential. Most recently, diverse countries, including Iran, the United States, and Nicaragua, have all seen political religion (re)appearing as an important political actor. Overall, we can note that recent and current manifestations of political religion should be seen in the context of a historical continuum of religion's public and political involvement which stresses *continuity* rather than *change*.

Four points conclude this section. First, religion has spiritual, material and, in some cases political, aspects. Second, religion played an important political role in many developing countries during the last years of colonialism. Third, patchy modernization and/or a more generalized 'atmosphere of crisis' are said to underpin an extant 'religious resurgence'. Fourth, while it is often claimed that there is a near-global religious revival, it may be that globalization – especially the accompanying communications revolution – may be rendering religion in politics more visible and to some more worrying than before.

The book's structure

Following this introductory chapter, the first section – Chapters 2–8 – examines various issues collected under the rubric 'religion and politics'. Chapter 2 discusses the current position of both secularism – that is, the idea that governments should rule separately from both organized religion and/or religious beliefs – and secularization – that is, the activity of changing the public realm so that it is no longer under the control or influence of religion. As we have noted, recent years have seen the unexpected return of the political significance of religion in most countries, which involves most extant religious traditions. Years of dominance of 'secularization theory' – that is, the belief that as societies 'modernize' they 'inevitably' became more 'developed', more secular and less religious – have given way to a realization that things are not as clear cut and linear as once widely thought. Put another way, given the intellectual predominance of secularization theory for much of the twentieth century the apparent 'return' of religion was unexpected and for secularists, inherently undesirable. This was because, since the eighteenth century and the subsequent formation and development of the 'modern' (that is, secular) international state system, religion was a key ideology stimulating political conflict between societal groups both within and between countries. Yet, following the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 and subsequent development of centralized states first in Western Europe and then via European colonization to the rest of the world, the political importance of religion declined as an organizing ideology both domestically and internationally.

In the early twenty-first century, however, many religious entities also have political concerns, including but not limited to those often characterized as 'religious fundamentalist' actors. We look at this issue in detail in Chapter 3. The chapter explains why, how and when religious fundamentalists seek to be politically influential in countries around the world, with emphasis on the post-Cold War era – that is, since the late 1980s. This was the time when the four decades long, ideologically polarized, secular conflict between the USA and the Soviet Union came to a sudden halt with the political fragmentation of the latter and the concomitant birth of numerous new states. Religious fundamentalists are noted among all the world religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism) and seem active in all regions of

the world, including the one routinely described as the most secular: Europe. Chapter 4 looks at how, especially since September 11, 2001, a conflict has emerged, the so-called ‘clash of civilizations’ between the radical Islamists of al-Qaeda and the secular but Christian-influenced West.

The two chapters that follow, Chapters 5 and 6 look at a region of the world with many examples of the political involvement of religious actors: sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Each of these chapters examines a particular aspect of this bigger picture. Chapter 5 focuses explicitly upon the role of both Christian and Muslim religious actors in relation to the region’s attempts at democratization in the 1990s and early 2000s. Chapter 6 looks at religious identity as a component of civil war in Sudan and Uganda.

Chapters 7 and 8 turn attention to the role of religion in conflict, conflict resolution and peace building in various countries. Chapter 7 is concerned with the potential of religion to help encourage peaceful relations between Israel and the Palestinians as a step towards building permanent peace between them. We have already noted that religion has made a notable return to political prominence in recent years, both domestically and in international relations. Religion has a durable and perhaps growing significance as a strong source of identity for millions of people around the world. Both religious individuals and faith-based organizations are notable as purveyors of ideas, which can encourage either conflict or conflict resolution and peace building. In particular, scholars have noted increased religious involvement in so-called ‘inter-civilizational’ conflicts, in relation to protests and increased tension between the Muslim world and the West following September 11, 2001 and publication of the ‘Mohammad cartoons’ in September 2005 in Denmark. The chapter (1) argues that, despite the potential for religious differences to lead to or exacerbate conflicts, religion can also be an important potential bridge in helping to resolve them, and (2) examines the role of religion in inter-civilizational conflict in relation to 9/11 and its aftermath.

Chapter 8 is concerned with the role of religious actors in conflict, conflict resolution and peace building in Mozambique, Nigeria and Cambodia. The chapter argues that in these three countries, religion can both encourage conflict and help to build peace, reflecting growing evidence that religious leaders and organizations can play constructive roles in helping to resolve conflicts. Religious leaders and organizations are the carriers and purveyors of sets of ideas that can play important roles, not only as a source of conflict, but also as a tool for conflict resolution and peace building. They may do this by, among other things, providing early warnings of conflict, good offices once conflict has erupted, and eventually contributing to advocacy, mediation and reconciliation. Brief case studies of religious peacemakers – from Mozambique, Nigeria and Cambodia – demonstrate such attempts, which are characteristically partially successful, to reconcile previously warring communities. As a result, they can help achieve improved social cohesion, providing a crucial foundation for progress in enhancing human development.

Chapters 9–16 are concerned with religion and international relations. The overall theme of these chapters is that the dynamics of the new religious pluralism influences the global political landscape, with sometimes significant impacts upon international order. Chapter 9 looks at the key issues involved in a survey of ‘religion and international relations’. I argue that there is widespread agreement about three recent changes in international relations that relate to religion. First, religion has to a large extent replaced secular ideologies – especially socialism – as a key source of identity for many people, significantly changing many affiliations and antagonisms in world affairs. Second, there has been a resurgence of religion in societies all over the world, except perhaps for Western Europe, although this supposition is increasingly contested. Third, the nature of international conflict has changed, with a relative scarcity of interstate wars. Of the 110 major conflicts during the 1990s – that is, those involving more than 1,000 fatalities each – only seven were interstate wars: 103 were civil wars. Of those 103, more than 70 per cent are classified as communal wars: that is, wars among ethnic and other national groups, very often with religion playing an important role in hostilities.

Chapters 10 and 11 turn attention to the role of religion in state foreign policies. Chapter 10 looks at religion and foreign policy making in the USA, India and Iran. The chapter introduces the concept of what I call ‘religious soft power’ in foreign policy making through a focus on these countries’ recent and current foreign policies. I suggest that, if religious actors ‘get the ear’ of key foreign policy makers because of their shared religious beliefs, the former may become able to influence foreign policy outcomes through the exercise of religious soft power, that is, the ability to get policy makers to adopt policies because they believe they are religiously appropriate to do so. In relation to the USA, India and Iran, the chapter argues that several named religious actors do significantly influence foreign policy through such a strategy. It also notes that such influence is apparent not only when key policy makers share religious values, norms and beliefs but also when policy makers accept that foreign policy *should* be informed by them.

Chapter 11 is concerned with a survey over time of politics, identity and religious nationalism in Turkey. It starts from the observation that when there is a close or even synonymous relationship between religion and nationalism, then it is customary to use the term ‘religious nationalism’. Religious nationalism is an important component of present-day international life, defining the nation in terms of shared religion, although not necessarily exclusively; it may also be connected to other components of identity, including culture, ethnicity and language. Religious nationalism is identified in various contexts, leading to different outcomes. When the state, as in present-day Iran or Saudi Arabia, or in Afghanistan under the Taliban (1996–2001) derives its political legitimacy primarily from public adherence to religious not secular doctrines, then what we have is a theocracy: the state is dominated by officials who believe themselves or are widely thought to be divinely guided. Overall, we can note

several ways in which religion and nationalism interact, identifying a number of degrees of influence which religion has on nationalism. A key category would be *religious nationalism*, where religion and nationalism are inseparable. Another category covers circumstances where religion plays a less influential although still significant role. The chapter focuses explicitly on the role of 'religious nationalism' in the recent and current foreign policy of Turkey. Turkey has had a government with its roots in political Islam for nearly a decade, since mid 2002, under the auspices of the Justice and Development Party (AKP). The chapter seeks to examine how religion has interacted with nationalism in relation to both countries' foreign policies, and to trace the development and course of this development in relation to specific foreign policies and outcomes during the 2000s.

To provide evidence for the claim that (1) transnational religious actors are increasingly influential in international relations, and (2) what they do is important for international order, Chapters 12–16 focus on transnational religious actors. Collectively, the chapters examine these cross-border, non-state, actors with a religious focus. Such entities are active in various parts of the world. It is sometimes claimed that they affect international order in various ways. The concept of international order centres on two main themes: (1) more or less consensual international acceptance of common values and norms – including the body of international law, and (2) development of institutions geared to preserve and develop international order. The combination of structures and processes – involving various actors, rules, mechanisms and understandings – serves overall to manage the coexistence and interdependence of states and non-state actors in the context of 'international society'. In the literature there is no consensus about the impact of transnational religious actors on international order, although there is generally acceptance that various religious actors can influence international order outcomes in various ways. Overall, Chapters 12–16 provide both theoretical examination and empirically focused case studies that allow us to assess the impact of selected transnational religious actors on international order and, by extension, international relations more generally.

Chapters 12 and 13 look at the phenomenon of transnational religious actors, focusing on the Roman Catholic Church and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) which, while made up of states, has an existence of its own that transcends individual or collective state preferences. The Roman Catholic Church has sought to develop its transnational influence in recent years, especially by encouraging numerous authoritarian governments – in Latin America, Africa and Eastern Europe – to democratize and more generally to improve their human rights regimes. We also look at the OIC, a transnational Muslim organization with both religious and political concerns. It was established in 1969 to promote dialogue and cooperation between Muslim and Western governments. In sum, these transnational religious actors all wish to see the spread and development of certain values and norms, with variable impacts

on international order and, more widely, international relations. Chapter 14 looks at groups of American Evangelical Protestants, entities that are sometimes referred to as the 'new internationalists', because of their concern with human rights, especially 'international religious freedom'. Over the last fifteen years, some US Evangelical Protestants have developed an international agenda focusing on improving human rights, especially religious freedoms, in various parts of the world.

It is unclear the extent to which US Evangelical Protestants, the Roman Catholic church and the OIC affect international order. It is obvious, however, that some transnational religious actors present significant challenges to international order, especially the extremist Islamist organization, al-Qaeda, the focus of Chapter 15 and, more generally, the post-9/11 US-directed 'war on terror', which is also a key focus of the following chapter, Chapter 16, which examines the rise of Islamist militancy in a strategically important world region, east Africa. The post-9/11 focus on al-Qaeda has more generally reignited the debate on the 'clash of civilizations' controversy, while at the same time serving to obscure the emergence of what many regard as a new transnational religious landscape marked by both inter-religious conflict *and* cooperation, and involving a number of broadly human rights and development issues. Informing this development are the impact of globalization and the accompanying communications revolution. This is a key factor in encouraging recent and continuing dynamic growth of transnational networks of religious actors. In addition, over the past two decades or so, global migration patterns have also helped spawned more active transnational religious communities. The overall result is a new religious pluralism that has impacted upon international relations in two key ways. First, there has been an emergence of what might be called 'global religious identities' that may lead to increasing inter-religious dialogues, involving greater religious engagement around various issues, including international development, conflict resolution and transitional justice. On the other hand, this globalizing environment is also said in some cases to encourage greater, often more intense, inter-religious competition, for example between Muslims and Christians in Sudan and Uganda (examined in Chapter 7). Chapter 16 looks directly at the rise of 'Islamic militancy' in east Africa, a direct but partial result of the influence of al-Qaeda.

The concluding chapter, Chapter 17, sums up and concludes the preceding chapters which, collectively, seek to provide a survey over time of the interaction of religion and politics, both domestically and internationally, in relation to a variety of issues of topical importance.

2

RELIGION, SECULARIZATION AND POLITICS

A postmodern conspectus

A critical question concerns the political role of religion. There is evidence of the following: (a) the postmodern condition stimulates a turning to religion under certain circumstances; (b) secularization continues in the industrialized West but not in many parts of the Third World; and (c) in the Third World, secular political ideologies – such as socialism and liberal democracy – are not necessarily regarded as the most useful for the pursuance of group goals; instead, religion, often allied with nationalism, ethnicity or communalism functions as a highly significant mobilizing oppositional ideology.

Some assert that we are witnessing a global resurgence of religion of great political significance (Hadden 1987; Shupe 1990; Thomas 1995). Others contend, however, that secularization is generally continuing, except under certain limited circumstances and conditions (Wallis and Bruce 1992; Wilson 1992; Bruce 1993). The continuing debate about the political importance of religion suggests that there is a lack of clarity concerning just *how* religious values, norms, and beliefs stimulate and affect socio-political developments and vice versa.

This chapter aims to be a contribution to the debate. Its main arguments are: (a) the postmodern condition stimulates a turning to religion under certain circumstances; (b) secularization continues in the industrialized West but not in many parts of the Third World; and (c) in the Third World, secular political ideologies – such as socialism and liberal democracy – are not necessarily regarded as the most useful for the pursuance of group goals; instead, religion, perhaps allied with nationalism, ethnicity or communalism often functions as a mobilizing oppositional ideology.

The chapter is in four parts. The first assesses interactions of religion and politics; in the second, I examine the claim that the current era is one of global religious resurgence. The third focuses on postmodernism, arguing that

it is a condition conducive to the growth of popular religion. The fourth part describes two types of popular religion used as oppositional ideologies: 'fundamentalist' and 'cultural'.

Religion and politics

Belief is at the core of religion. Bellah noted more than thirty years ago that it is extremely difficult to come up with a 'brief handy definition of religion'; nothing has changed since then to make the task any easier. He defines religion as 'a set of symbolic forms and acts which relate man [*sic*] to the ultimate conditions of his existence' (Bellah 1964: 359). I use the term in the chapter in two distinct, yet related, ways. First, in a material sense it refers to religious establishments (i.e. institutions and officials), as well as to social groups and movements whose *raison d'être* are religious concerns. Examples include the conservative Roman Catholic organization, Opus Dei, the reformist Islamic Salvation Front of Algeria (FIS), and the Hindu-chauvinist Bharatiya Jana Party of India. Second, in a spiritual sense, religion pertains to models of social and individual behaviour that help believers to organize their everyday lives. Religion is to do with the idea of transcendence, that is it relates to supernatural realities; with sacredness, that is as a system of language and practice that organizes the world in terms of what is deemed holy; and with ultimacy, that is it relates people to the ultimate conditions of existence. In sum, for purposes of social analysis, religion may be approached (a) from the perspective of a body of ideas and outlooks (i.e. as theology and ethical code), (b) as a type of formal organization (e.g. the ecclesiastical Church) and (c) as a social group (e.g. religious movements).

Therborn argues that there are two basic ways 'in which religions can affect this world': (a) by what they say, and (b) by what they do (Therborn 1994: 104). The former is the doctrine or theology. The latter refers to religion as a social phenomenon working through variable modes of institutionalization, including political parties and church-state relations, and functioning as a mark of identity. In other words, religion does not simply have meaning at the individual level. It is also, like politics, a matter of group solidarities and often of inter-group tension and conflict, focusing either on shared or disagreed images of the scared, or on cultural and class issues. To complicate matters, '[t]hese ... influences ... tend to operate differently and with different temporalities for the same theologically defined religion in different parts of the world' (Moyser 1991: 11). In addition, 'assessing the political impact of religion depends greatly on what facet of religion is being considered and which specific political arena is under investigation' (Wald 1991: 251). In sum, it is very difficult to isolate religion's influence alone, because it will almost invariably be part of a combination of causal forms.

It is, however, possible to assess the political importance of religion in the area of church-state relations. Therborn argues that, 'the more close the relationship

[of the church]¹ to the state, the less resistance to adaptation [to modernity]' (Therborn 1994: 105). Over time, especially in the industrialized West, main-line churches, that is mainstream religious organizations, generally develop an empathetic relation with political power, even when they oppose it.

Most typologies of church–state relations underscore their mutual synergy. More than eighty years ago, for example, Weber identified three types of relations between secular and ecclesiastical power hierocratic, where secular power is dominant but cloaked in a religious legitimacy; theocratic, where ecclesiastical authority is pre-eminent over secular power; and caesaro–papist, where secular power holds sway over religion itself (Weber 1978: 1159–60). Recent typologies take into account the growing separation between church and state, a function of Western-style modernization, leading to increasing secularization. Parsons (1960), reflecting the creation of anti-religion states in the USSR, Albania and elsewhere, notes that a church may have a symbiotic relationship with the state at one extreme or be totally separate from it at the other; the latter position is not in Weber's typology.

Medhurst (1981) extends the range of types of state–church relationship from three to four, proposing 'The Integrated "Religio-Political System"' (IRS), 'The Confessional Polity (or State)', 'The Religiously Neutral Polity (or State)', and 'The Anti-Religious Polity (or State)'. The IRS, a type of theocracy, virtually extinct, with Saudi Arabia Medhurst's only extant example, pertains to pre-modern political systems where religious and spiritual power converge in one figure. Historical examples include pre-1945 Japan and ancient Mesopotamia. The IRS is rare because one of the most consistent effects of modernization is to separate religious and secular power. With the demise of the Marxist states of Eastern Europe, the 'Anti-Religious Polity', where religion is 'throttled', is also very uncommon.

The remaining two categories of church–state relationship highlighted by Medhurst are, in contrast, frequently encountered. The 'Confessional Polity' emerges when the 'traditional "religio-political system" begins to crumble and gives way to a new situation of religious or ideological pluralism' (Medhurst 1981: 120). In other words, this is a situation characterized by a (more or less) formal separation of state and (dominant) religion, although in practice close links between the two endure. Examples include Ireland, Colombia and post-revolutionary Iran. The 'Religiously Neutral Polity', on the other hand, includes constitutionally secular states such as India, the USA and the Netherlands. No religion is given official predominance.

Reflecting the demise of the Eastern European communist bloc, Mitra offers four different categories of church–state relations: (a) hegemonic, where one religion dominates, but other religions are tolerated, as in Britain, corresponding closely to Medhurst's 'Confessional Polity'; (b) theocratic, e.g. Iran, Israel where, unlike Medhurst's IRS category, state power is dependent upon a close relationship with the dominant religion; (c) secular, e.g. France, USSR, USA, corresponding to Medhurst's 'Religiously Neutral Polity'; and

(d) neutral, e.g. India, where government is even-handed in its approach to all religions, including the dominant (Mitra 1991: 758–9).

For Mitra, religion provides the moral basis of the state's authority, as well as an institutional and metaphysical structure for social transactions. Yet, religion is affected by the dispositions of temporal power and by changing social norms and attitudes, especially secularization. In the context of church–state relations, according to Mitra, the 'specific role attributed to religion at a given time and place depends primarily upon the status of religion in the constitutional framework and the social meaning attached to it' (Mitra 1991: 758). The constitutional position of religion is reflected in his typology. The social meaning, on the other hand, may alter, perhaps radically, a result of changing circumstances.

It has traditionally been assumed that the connection between politics and religion is only a problem among nations that are not religiously homogeneous. Most political thinkers since Aristotle have taken it for granted that religious homogeneity is a condition of political stability within a polity. When, however, opposing beliefs about 'ultimate values enter the political arena, they exacerbate struggles by preventing compromise' (Alford 1969: 321). Such is clear in relation to the country upon which Mitra focuses, India, where communal strife between Hindus and Muslims is common, and has been for decades. While the relationship between state and church within a country may well be of importance politically, the socio-political position of a religion cannot only be dependent on the constitutional position.

Mitra views the relationship between state, society and religion as triadic, as Figure 2.1 shows. The role of religion in politics in a national setting, he believes, is 'influenced by the specific kind of state and society relation that obtains in a given historical conjuncture A particular historical conjuncture may be conducive towards the growth of a particular form of religious movement' (Mitra 1991: 757).

In India, modernization was expected by the post-colonial political elite to lead eventually to the secularization of the country; hence, the constitution is neutral towards it. Things turned out differently, however, democratization and secularization worked at cross-purposes; increasing participation in the political arena drew in new social forces demanding greater formal recognition of particular religions – especially Hinduism and Sikhism. This was responsible for making religion the central issue, not only in Indian politics, but also in many other Third World countries.

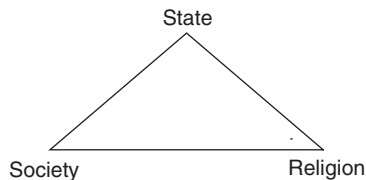


FIGURE 2.1 The triadic relationship of state, society and religion (source: Mitra 1991: 757).

Religious resurgence or continuing secularization?

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

(Woollacott 1995)

It is beyond dispute that, during the last thirty years, religion played an important political role in quite a few countries: the overthrow of the Shah of Iran; civil conflict in many African countries, including Sudan, Nigeria and South Africa; the demise of the Eastern European communist bloc; demands for political change in the Islamic world; the reworking of politics in the USA; the wars of former Yugoslavia; the troubles of South Asia; and in the dilemmas of a divided Israel.

The question of what is the nature of this largely unexpected interposition of religion in politics is a troubling one. Does it necessitate a rethinking of the secularization paradigm? This is a puzzle and a problem; yet, all who assess the situation bring their perceptions and prejudices. Basically, however, views can be dichotomized: thus, those who do not believe assign every cause but the divine to religious movements and effects; those who have faith perceive the hand of God in what appears to many a widespread religious efflorescence. I have sympathy for both positions.

The decline in the social and political importance of religion in the West is solidly grounded in mainstream social science. As Shupe notes, '[t]he demystification of religion inherent in the classic secularization paradigm posit[s] a gradual, persistent, unbroken erosion of religious influence in urban industrial societies' (Shupe 1990: 19). Secularization implies a unidirectional process, whereby societies move from a sacred condition to successively areligious states; the sacred becomes increasingly social and politically marginal. The commanding figures of nineteenth century social science – Durkheim, Weber, Marx – argued that secularization is an integral facet of modernization, a global trend. Everywhere, so the argument goes, religion would become privatized, losing its grip on culture, becoming a purely personal matter, no longer a collective force with mobilizing potential for social change.

In short, secularization is 'the most fundamental structural and ideological change in the process of political development' (Smith 1970: 6). It is a trend whereby societies gradually move away from being focused around the sacred and a concern with the divine, leading to a diminution of religious power and authority. A consequence is a gradual transformation in the traditional relationship between religion and politics.

Five components of the secularization process are of importance in the relationship between church and state: (1) *constitutional secularization* – religious institutions cease to be given special constitutional recognition and support;

(2) *policy secularization* – the state expands its policy domains and service provisions into areas previously reserved for the religious sphere; (3) *institutional secularization* – religious structures lose their political saliency and influence as pressure groups, parties and movements; (4) *agenda secularization* – issues, needs and problems deemed relevant to the political process no longer have an overtly religious content; (5) *ideological secularization* – ‘the basic values and belief-systems used to evaluate the political realm and to give it meaning cease to be couched in religious terms’ (Moyser 1991: 14).

Secularization is clearest in the industrialized West, where falling income levels for mainline churches, declining numbers and quality of religious professionals, and diminishing church attendance collectively point to ‘a process of decline in the social significance of religion’ (Wilson 1992: 198). Religion in the West has by and large lost many of the functions it once fulfilled for other social institutions, in particular providing ‘legitimacy for secular authority’; endorsing, even sanctioning public policy; sustaining with ‘a battery of threats and blandishments the agencies of social control’; claiming to be the font of ‘true’ learning; socializing the young; and ‘sponsoring a range of recreative activities’ (Wilson 1992: 200).

In the Third World, in contrast, religion has by and large retained a much higher level of social importance, even in many swiftly modernizing societies. I want to argue that secularization, involving social differentiation, societalization and rationalization, occurs *except when religion finds or retains work to do other than relating people to the supernatural*. As Bruce puts it, ‘[o]nly when religion does something other than mediate between man and God does it retain a high place in people’s attentions and in their politics’ (Bruce 1993: 51).

Generally, religion shrinks in social significance except in two broad contexts. First, as a component of *cultural defence*, that is ‘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’; second, in the context of *cultural transition*, i.e. where ‘identity is threatened in the course of major cultural transitions’ (Wallis and Bruce 1992: 17–18). In both cases, religion may furnish the resources either for dealing with such transitions or for asserting a group’s claim to a sense of worth.

Opponents of the secularization thesis assert that the current era is characterized by a widespread – even global – religious resurgence, that the secularization trajectory is in reverse (Shupe 1990; Sahliyah 1990a, 1990b; Thomas 1995; Woollacott 1995). Thomas argues that ‘the global resurgence of religious ideas and social movements is one of the most unexpected events at the end of the twentieth century ... taking place at the same time among diverse cultures, in different countries, and in states at different levels of economic development’ (Thomas 1995: 1). Sahliyah claims that over the last two decades or so, ‘a number of highly politicized religious groups, institutions and movements, surfaced in different parts of the world. Although of different faiths and sects, these groups shared a common desire to change their societies and even to change

the international order'. Some confine their activities to the realm of political protest, reform or change through the ballot box, others resort to violence in pursuit of their objectives (Sahliyah 1990a: vi).

Sahliyah argues that there are three 'broad categories' of reasons explaining the alleged global resurgence of political religion. First there is the destabilizing impact of modernization. Rather than leading to secularization, the social upheaval and economic dislocation associated with modernization lead to a renewal of traditional religions (Sahliyah 1990b: 15). Second, he perceives religious resurgence as a response to a generalized 'crisis atmosphere', stemming from a range of factors, including

the inconclusive modernizing efforts of secular elites in the Third World, growing disillusionment with secular nationalism, problems of legitimacy and political oppression in many developing countries, problems of national identity, widespread socio-economic grievances, and the erosion of traditional morality and values both in the West and in the Third World. The coterminous existence of several or all of these crises in much of the contemporary world provides a fertile milieu for the return to religion.

(Sahliyah 1990b: 6)

Sahliyah's final factor is that the political activism of contemporary religious groups and movements is partially accountable by allusion to a 'resource mobilization model'. Three elements are important: (1) religious groups must have the opportunity to form politically oriented groups; (2) the political vitality of a religious group depends upon adequate financial resources, political leadership, organizational structures, communications networks, manpower and a mobilizing ideology; (3) religious groups need 'incentives, reasons, and motives' before they can organize (Sahliyah 1990b: 10–11). In short, to be politically active, religious groups must have a political *raison d'être*, leaders, cadres, resources and ideology.

An alternative viewpoint is that, rather than religious resurgence, what is happening is that political religion is now more visible due principally to the global communications revolution – political religion is persistent not resurgent. Shupe argues that, throughout the world, 'organized religion is a stubbornly persistent and ... integral factor in ... politics' (Shupe 1990: 18). Smith claims that '[w]hat 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' (Smith 1990: 34). This is also a view broadly endorsed by Huntington (1991, 1993).

What is happening in the Third World, it is claimed, is merely the latest manifestation of a cyclical religious resurgence highlighted by enhanced global communications. Smith points to Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Catholicism experiencing periods of intense political activity followed by periods of quiescence over the last six or seven decades (Smith 1990: 34; Haynes 1993, 1996b).

Traditionally, religion in the Third World is the ideology of opposition par excellence; thus, in the contemporary era, there is no religious resurgence – instead, it never went away.

Between the world wars, religion was frequently used in the service of anti-colonial nationalism in the Third World, a major facet of national identity vis-à-vis colonial rule (Haynes 1996a: 55–6). During the 1920s and 1930s, for example, in Algeria, Egypt and Indonesia, Islamic consciousness was the chief ideology of nationalist movements. Immediately after the Second World War, in 1947, Pakistan was founded as a Muslim state, religiously and culturally distinct from India, 80 per cent Hindu. A decade later, political Buddhism was of importance in Burma, Sri Lanka and South Vietnam, while in Latin America in the 1960s both Christian democracy and liberation theology were politically consequential. Ten years later, in both Iran and Nicaragua religion also assumed an important role in politics. During the 1980s, religion was active in a number of contexts, including the demise of communism in Eastern Europe, neo-Buddhist movements in Southeast Asia, Hindu-chauvinist parties in India and the FIS in Algeria. In sum, opposition is the traditional forte of political religious groups, and has been since the early years of the twentieth century. The current manifestations of political religion should be seen in this historical context, exemplifying continuity rather than change.

Postmodernism and political religion

At first glance, the interconnections between the varieties of extant political religions, such as the ‘new political activism of American clergymen; the radicalism of Catholic priests and liberation theology in Latin America; the growth of Islamic fundamentalism ...; [and] Sikh separatism in India’ are either ‘weak or nonexistent. Liberation theologians and revolutionary ayatollahs may be aware of each other’s existence but have not influenced each other very much’ (Smith 1990: 33). What, if anything, do these manifestations of political religion have in common, other than they have all occurred over the last thirty years?

As noted above, secularization makes sustained progress except when religion finds or retains work to do other than relating individuals to the supernatural. Those who argue that there is conclusive evidence of a *global* resurgence of political religion, many of whom are religious people, are, in my opinion, indulging in wishful thinking. On the other hand, it cannot be gainsaid that examples of political religion abound; Smith’s argument that we are just more aware of them than previously certainly has merit. I doubt, however, that this is the whole story. Sahliyeh’s allusion to ‘social crisis’, the importance of communications networks, and social upheaval and economic dislocation are all characteristic of the postmodern condition.

Examples of political religion noted above relate emphatically to the mundane; they are rooted in perceptions of a group feeling that the status quo is

not conducive to long-term well-being. In the case of Sikh separatism, cultural defence is the mobilizing issue, catalysed by the re-emergence of Hindu chauvinism. In the other three examples – American clergymen, radical Latin American Catholic priests and Islamic fundamentalism – the rigours of cultural transition, where identity is threatened, underpin and galvanize the religious reaction.

The term postmodernism, apparently coined by J.-F. Lyotard (1979), is defined by him as incredulity towards meta-narratives, that is rejection of absolute ways of speaking truth. Postmodernism is an enigmatic concept, whose very ambiguity reflects the confusion and uncertainty inherent in contemporary life. The term is applied in and to many diverse spheres of human life and activity. It is important for politics as it decisively reflects the end of belief in the Enlightenment project, the assumption of universal Progress based on Reason, and in the 'modern Promethean myth of humanity's mastery of its destiny and capacity for resolution of all its problems' (Watson 1994: 150). Socially, postmodernism refers to 'changes in the everyday practices and experiences of different groups, who ... develop new means of orientation and identity structures Postmodernism ... directs our attention to changes taking place in contemporary culture' (Featherstone 1988: 208).

The emergence of the postmodern era, I want to argue, is of major significance for political religion. (For a discussion of postmodernism and Christianity, see Simpson 1992; and in relation to Islam, see Ahmed 1992.) Ahmed argues that postmodernism 'encourages the rejection of centres and systems, engenders the growth of local identity, makes available information and thus teaches people to demand their rights, ... fosters ideas of freedom and eclecticism, [and] challenges the state' (Ahmed 1992: 129). Rosenau stresses the fragmentation and voluntarism inherent in postmodernism.

Consistent with the decentralizing tendencies that have disrupted authority relations at all levels is the diminishing hold that all-encompassing systems of thought exercise over their adherents. This decay can be discerned in the pockets of disaffection with the scientific rationalism of Western thought – with what is considered to be the end of 'progress' as defined by the 'modernity project' – represented by postmodernist formulations ...

(Rosenau 1990: 414)

Like Ahmed and Rosenau, De Gruchy stresses that both the opportunities and the destabilization that postmodernism represents is 'turbulent, traumatic and dislocating, yet it is also one which is potentially creative' (De Gruchy 1995: 5). According to Simpson, 'the postmodern factor is defined by a sociopolitical dimension, a cultural/interpretive dimension, and a human rights dimension' (Simpson 1992: 13).

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, followed by the sudden, unexpected demise of communist systems in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in

1990–91, exemplified the socio-political and human rights dimensions of the postmodern era. They marked a fundamental historical change from one epoch to another, helping to fuel widespread, albeit transitory, optimism that a benign ‘New World Order’ would follow the ideological divisiveness and malignity of the Cold War. Optimism was premised particularly upon the spread of liberal democracy, pluralism and human rights to non-democratic countries. After the Cold War, liberal democracy – with its implicit acceptance of religious pluralism – ‘found itself without enemies or viable alternatives’ (Hyden 1992: 4; also see Fukuyama 1992).

It is sometimes argued that religious fundamentalism is the chief manifestation of the cultural/interpretive dimension of postmodernism (Cox 1984; Simpson 1992:). While religious fundamentalism is undeniably politically and theologically important, it is nonetheless necessary to bear in mind that it is but one religious interpretation with contemporary resonance; moreover, it is the realm of opposition.

Throughout history, the world religions have functioned as ‘terrains of meaning’, subject to radically different interpretations and conflicts, often with profound social and political implications. Islam, Christianity and Buddhism have long traditions of reformers, populists and ‘protestants’, seeking to give the religion contemporary meaning and social salience. The postmodern era, rather than being dominated by fundamentalism alone, is a period of wider religious reinterpretation, where popular religion challenges mainline religious organizations.

(a) Religious fundamentalism

Attempts to salvage the secularization model have interpreted evidence of burgeoning religiosity in many contemporary political events to mean that we are witnessing merely a fundamentalist, antimodernist backlash against science, industrialization, and liberal Western values.

(Shupe 1990: 19)

The political lines have increasingly been drawn between those in all major religious communities who remain deeply enmeshed in religious cultures and persons who wear their religious loyalty rather more lightly. The former inhabit subcultures that stress moral traditionalism and encourage its application to public policy while the latter, freed of exposure to traditional rules of conduct, are more disposed to accept a libertarian ethic in what is called “lifestyle choice”. By virtue of their encapsulation in organizations which transmit political norms, the strongly religious exhibit greater political cohesion than the unchurched who divide according to other criteria.

(Wald 1991: 279–80)