Religion and Authoritarianism

Cooperation, Conflict, and the Consequences

This book provides a rare window into the micropolitics of contemporary authoritarian rule through a comparison of religious-state relations in Russia and China – two countries with long histories of religious repression and even longer experiences with authoritarian politics. Drawing on extensive fieldwork in multiple sites in these countries, this book explores what religious and political authority want from one another, how they negotiate the terms of their relationship, and how cooperative or conflicting their interactions are. This comparison reveals that although tensions exist between the two sides, there is also ample room for mutually beneficial interaction. Religious communities and their authoritarian overseers are cooperating around the core issue of politics – namely, the struggle for money, power, and prestige – and becoming unexpected allies in the process.

Karrie J. Koesel is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Oregon, where she specializes in the study of contemporary Chinese and Russian politics, authoritarianism, and religion and politics. Her work has appeared in Perspectives on Politics, The China Quarterly, and Post-Soviet Affairs. Koesel’s research has been supported by grants from the John Templeton Foundation, the Social Science Research Council, the Fulbright program, the International Research & Exchanges Board, the Einaudi Center and East Asia Program at Cornell University, and the University of Oregon. In 2010, she was the recipient of the American Political Science Association Aaron Wildavsky Award for the best dissertation in religion and politics.
Cambridge Studies in Social Theory, Religion and Politics

Editors

David C. Leege
University of Notre Dame

Kenneth D. Wald
University of Florida, Gainesville

Richard L. Wood
University of New Mexico

The most enduring and illuminating bodies of late nineteenth-century social theory – by Marx, Weber, Durkheim, and others – emphasized the integration of religion, polity, and economy through time and place. Once a staple of classic social theory, however, religion gradually lost the interest of many social scientists during the twentieth century. The recent emergence of phenomena such as Solidarity in Poland; the dissolution of the Soviet empire; various South American, southern African, and South Asian liberation movements; the Christian Right in the United States; and Al Qaeda have reawakened scholarly interest in religiously based political conflict. At the same time, fundamental questions are once again being asked about the role of religion in stable political regimes, public policies, and constitutional orders. The series Cambridge Studies in Social Theory, Religion and Politics will produce volumes that study religion and politics by drawing upon classic social theory and more recent social scientific research traditions. Books in the series offer theoretically grounded, comparative, empirical studies that raise “big” questions about a timely subject that has long engaged the best minds in social science.

Titles in the Series:

Paul A. Djupe and Christopher P. Gilbert, The Political Influence of Churches
Joel S. Fetzer and J. Christopher Soper, Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany
Jonathan Fox, A World Survey of Religion and the State
Anthony Gill, The Political Origins of Religious Liberty
Kees van Kersbergen and Philip Manow, editors, Religion, Class Coalitions, and Welfare States
Karrie J. Koesel, Religion and Authoritarianism: Cooperation, Conflict, and the Consequences
Ahmet T. Kuru, Secularism and State Policies toward Religion: The United States, France, and Turkey
Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide
Peter Stamatov, The Origins of Global Humanitarianism: Religion, Empires, and Advocacy
Religion and Authoritarianism

Cooperation, Conflict, and the Consequences

KARRIE J. KOESEL

University of Oregon
To Patrick, Sasha, and Addi
Those who say religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion is.

– Mahatma Gandhi
Contents

List of Figure, Table, and Illustrations  page xi
Acknowledgments  xiii

1  Introduction: The Politics of Religion  1
2  Religion and State Games  13
3  Regulating the Religious Marketplace  32
4  The Political Economy of Religious Revival  62
5  The Politics of Faith, Power, and Prestige  117
6  Conclusions: Collaboration and Conflict in Comparison  157

Appendix A: Methodology and Data  185
Appendix B: Interviews Cited  188
Bibliography  193
Index  223
List of Figure, Table, and Illustrations

Figure

2.1 The logic of religious and state interaction in authoritarian regimes  page 16

Table

4.1 Changchun Government Expenses for the Return of Religious Property, 1985  89

Illustrations

4.1 and 4.2 Buddhist temple and attached commercial development in 2007  69
4.3 Buddhist temple expansion in 2010  70
4.4 Food stall at a temple fair in Shanghai, Lunar New Year 2007  83
4.5 Bumper cars at a temple fair in Shanghai, Lunar New Year 2007  84
4.6 Thanksgiving Church in Shanghai, 2010  85
4.7 The demolition of apartment complex adjacent to the Three Outlooks temple in 2007  97
4.8 The Three Outlooks temple gate in 2007  98
4.9 The Three Outlooks temple new gate in 2010  99
4.10 The Church of the Ascension of Our Lady in the Il'inskaja sloboda region, 2012  102
4.11 Kul-Sharif Mosque in Kazan, 2006  105
List of Figure, Table, and Illustrations

4.12 and 4.13 The exterior of the Songjiang mosque and adjoining shops, 2007 110
4.14 The Basilica of Our Lady of Sheshan, 2007 112
4.15 The chairlift for the Sheshan Holiday Resort, 2007 113
5.1 “Danger Totalitarian Sect” warning posted outside of the Nizhny Kremlin, 2006 122
5.2 Propaganda banner at a Shanghai Taoist temple, 2006 135
5.3 The Rainbow Bridge, 2007 141
5.4 and 5.5 The stone bridges and informal altars of Jinze, 2010 142
Acknowledgments

Writing a book is a long, collaborative endeavor and I owe many a debt of gratitude. The greatest are to my mentors, Valerie J. Bunce, Elizabeth J. Perry, Sidney Tarrow, and Kenneth Roberts. It is undoubtedly a privilege to study in the company of such extraordinary scholars, and I have greatly benefitted from their wisdom, criticism, and friendship. I am especially indebted to Val Bunce for her invaluable feedback on countless drafts, unwavering support for the comparative project, and encouragement to ask big, important questions.

I am also extremely grateful to the series editors, David C. Leege, Kenneth Wald, and Richard L. Wood. It was truly a pleasure to work with such dedicated editors and generous scholars, who offered both rich feedback and a considerable amount of autonomy to ensure the book remained my own. I also wish to thank Lew Bateman and Cambridge University Press for their professionalism in bringing the manuscript to press.

Over the many years, numerous colleagues raised crucial questions and shared valuable insights that have strengthened the book. A special thanks goes to Tony Gill, who showed an early interest in the project, offered indispensable advice, and even included me in his Research on Religion podcast. I also benefited a great deal from many individuals who graciously offered their time and expertise, including Febe Armanios, Ameya Balsekar, Allen Carlson, Matt Evangelista, Felix Giron, Dev Gupta, Ron Herring, Denise Ho, Brooks Jessup, Jeanne Kormina, Toby Lincoln, Dave Luesink, Don Miller, Andy Mertha, Sasha Panchenko, David Patel, Tsseta Petrova, Maria Repnikova, Andres Rodriguez, Cole Roskam, Rachel Stern, Tariq Thachil, Wang Jianping, and Zhang Xin. I am also particularly indebted to my colleagues at the University of Oregon who offered advice on key chapters and provided enormous support.

During field research in Russia and China, I was the beneficiary of many institutions and individuals. I was graciously hosted by the Moscow Carnegie
Acknowledgments

Center, the Linguistic University of Nizhny Novgorod, and Kazan State University in Russia. In China, the foreign affairs departments at the Shanghai Academy of Social Science and Jilin University helped me gain my footing and facilitate my research. Additionally, I owe an enormous debt to those who helped me negotiate local landscapes with their time and expertise – in particular, Rafiq Abdrakhmanov, Cai Rong, Ilya Gerasimov, Zuhra Khusnutdinova, Larisa Levanova Kempbell, Li Xiangping, Li Yihai, Ma Lei, Marina Mogilner, Rafiq Mukhameetzhan, Rosa Musina, Aigul Sabirova, Alexander Sergounin, Olga Senjutkina, Wang Caibo, Wang Jianhui, Xiao Ke, Xiao Yu, Xia Yu, Xi Tianyang, Yang He, Zhou Shu, and Zhou Yi. To the many courageous and dedicated individuals in China and Russia who took risks to share their stories, so that we may all better understand the politics of religion under authoritarian rule, I am especially grateful.

Field research for this project was generously supported by numerous organizations. I thank the John Templeton Foundation and the Pentecostal and Charismatic Research Initiative (PCRI), the Center for Religion and Civic Culture at the University of Southern California, the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX-IARO), the Fulbright-IIE Program in China, the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) Eurasia Program, the Institute of European Studies and East Asia Program at Cornell University, and the University of Oregon Political Science Department.

And lastly, I want to express my warmest thanks to my family, especially to my parents, Fred and Judy Koesel, for their unconditional love and support. I also remain impossibly indebted to Patrick W. Deegan for his steadfast encouragement and intellect, which has enriched this book. And finally to my Sasha and Addi for reminding me what is important and why – this book is dedicated to them.