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Introduction: The Politics of Religion

> Religion is the opiate of the people.
>
> – Karl Marx

In the summer of 1999, I made the familiar walk through a crowded market in the northeastern city of Changchun, China. Like most mornings, the market noise was deafening as shoppers haggled with farmers over vegetables pedaled in from the countryside before dawn. As I slipped through the crowds and into a neighboring park, the morning became unusually quiet. Gone were the hundreds of ballroom dancers with their scratchy record player, the martial artists practicing sword fighting, the retirees walking backward, and the tai chi masters training their devoted students. For the first time in almost two years, the park was alarmingly empty.

Later that day, I bumped into a student and asked if the park had closed for renovations. "No" she explained, "it's open, but empty because of Falun Gong." A recent editorial in the *People's Daily* had denounced the quasi-religious group as an "evil cult" (*xiejiao*), and the local government was beginning to crack down on their activities. In fact, the local campaign was expected to be particularly severe because Changchun was the hometown of Falun Gong's founder, Li Hongzhi, and the park was considered a popular place to meet and recruit members.

At the time, it seemed strange that other associational groups would also self-censor their activities or that local cadres might confuse the lively energy of ballroom dancing with the more somber Falun Gong meditations. However, over the following weeks, the extent of the crackdown became evident – even the local Avon and Amway salespeople had been targeted for their "cultlike" activities. Apparently, the door-to-door selling of lipstick and laundry detergent was under investigation for being part of a pyramid scheme, behavior that local officials associated with cults. In many ways, the campaign against Falun Gong

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is a familiar story about the politics of religion under authoritarian rule, the quickly shifting political winds, the coercive reach of the state, and the reverberations felt across civil society. This book tells a different story: one in which the relationship between religious and political authority is far more complex.

This book examines the political consequences of growing religiosity in countries where politics is repressive and religious freedoms have yet to be well defined. It explores religious-state relations across different authoritarian settings, detailing how autocratic state actors manage religious groups and, just as importantly, how religious communities navigate state and society from the political margins. More specifically, this study analyzes what religious and political authorities want from one another, how they negotiate the terms of their relationship, and, as a result, how cooperative or conflictual are their interactions.

At present, the literature suggests several reasons to expect conflictual if not outright hostile relations between religious communities and their authoritarian overseers. First, religion and the state represent competing centers of authority. Most modern states, including autocratic ones, tend to base their legitimacy on the secular principles of delivering stability, order, and economic growth, whereas religion claims a "higher" authority that transcends the state and its leaders.[1] For those in power, therefore, religious groups raise the fundamental question of loyalty. Another reason to expect religious-state tension is that authoritarian leaders often lack popular legitimacy to rule. As a result, they seek to co-opt religious institutions (and leaders) as well as incorporate religious symbols, titles, and rituals into the regime to enhance their base of support and legitimize their position.[2] Indeed, the instrumental use of religion has proved to be one of the most effective tools of state-building because "challenges to the state will be classified as sins – political dissent will be identified as sacrilege, for the state rules with divine right."[3]

A third reason to expect religious-state conflict highlights the role of civil society in authoritarian political contexts. As the extensive literature on civil society indicates, some of the key functions of associational groups are to balance against state power, articulate shared interests, stimulate civic participation, and socialize democratic norms.[4] In authoritarian regimes, however,

[1] See Gill (1998); Moen and Gustafson (1992); Bellah and Hammond (1980).
[2] Toft, Philpott, and Shah (2011); Linz (1996 [2004]); Johnston and Figa (1988).
[3] Stark and Bainbridge (1985: 508); see also Seul (1999); Berger (1967: 22).
[4] There is an extensive literature on civil society. See, for example, Henderson (2003); Howard (2003); Chambers and Kymlicka (2002); Krishna (2002); Gibson (2001); Ottaway and Carothers (2000); de Tocqueville (2000 [1835]); Diamond (1999, 1994); Schmitter (1997); Putnam (1993); Przeworski (1992). Within this scholarship, some influential scholars of civil society, such as Robert Putman, have been hesitant to include religious associations into the ranks of civil society because they tend to be hierarchical and are organized in nondemocratic ways. The argument here is that religious groups do not engender the same kind of democratic norms as secular associations. However, in recent scholarship, Robert Putnam and David Campell (2010) found that religion can promote a healthy civil society, particularly in democratic regimes. For example, religious Americans are three to four times more likely to be involved in their community than

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the ability of civil society groups to fulfill these responsibilities can be limited. Autocratic rulers are generally assumed to control if not dominate all aspects of associational life. Civil society groups are seen as "illegitimate" and "inauthentic" because they do not function as mechanisms for collective empowerment or a buffer between state and society as their democratic counterparts do. Thus, civil society is often relegated to little more than a wolf in sheep's clothing – a tool of the regime to identify dissidents, socialize potential troublemakers, tame opposition, solicit support from groups outside the ruling elite, and promote and reinforce state policies and leaders.[5]

At the same time, studies of authoritarianism identify another function of civil society in that political context: to challenge autocratic rule.[6] Religious groups, as members of civil society, may be particularly threatening to authoritarian leaders because of their perceived ability to mobilize, especially at the grassroots. This is because religion is not simply a body of beliefs but also a community of believers.[7] In authoritarian regimes, religious communities tend to represent the most diverse and robust forms of associational life outside of the state. They are voluntary organizations that cut across cleavages. They are endowed with resources and dedicated supporters, often led by charismatic leaders, and tied to larger domestic and transnational networks.[8] In other words, religious communities have a distinct set of resources that make them particularly good at mobilization – a toolkit that authoritarian elites and their allies view as extremely threatening.[9]

Indeed, religious entities have frequently played a prominent role in mobilizing against authoritarian rule. Not only did the 1979 Iranian Revolution topple a secular shah (replacing one form of authoritarianism with another), but also during the third wave of democratization (1970–90s), many Catholic leaders across Latin America, Africa, and Asia used their moral authority to condemn authoritarian governments, mobilize opposition, and promote political change.[10] At the same time, the struggle against communism in

nonbelievers. In fact, people of faith are also more likely to volunteer for community projects, attend public meetings, vote in local elections, participate in protest demonstrations and political rallies, and donate time and money to secular and religious causes.

[5] For discussions of civil society under authoritarian rule, see, for example, Hildebrandt (2011); Jamal (2007); Wedeen (2007); Brownlee (2007); Riley (2005); Foster (2001); Wiktorowicz (2001); Leahy (2000); Linz (2000); Bunce (1999); Frolic (1997); Brook and Frolic (1997); White et al. (1996).

[6] See especially, Havel, Keane, and Lukes (1985); Chirot (1991); Bernhard (1993); Kubik (1994); Scott (1997); but see also S. Berman (1997); Encarnacion (2003).

[7] Scott (2005).

[8] See especially Smith (1996); also Philpott (2007); Wald et al. (2005); Rudolph (1997).

[9] Acemoglu and Robinson (2006); Huard (2000).

[10] Of course, there is variation among religious actors during the third wave, and some remained neutral while others were pro-authoritarian. For a more detailed discussion of religion during this time, see Toft, Philpott, and Shah (2011); Gill (2002, 1998); Linz (1996 [2004]); Borer (1998); Kamrava and O'Mora (1998); Fleet and Smith (1997); Cavendish (1995); Huntington (1991); Mainwaring and Wilde (1989); Mainwaring (1986). More generally, see Haynes (2009) for a discussion of religion and democratization.

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Eastern Europe took multiple forms.[11] Imprisoned religious leaders in Hungary became international martyrs of Stalinist repression, and religious institutions sought subtle strategies of subversion through policy reforms.[12] In contrast, the Catholic Church in Poland took a more assertive stance as both a symbol of national resistance and resource to coordinate the anticommunist opposition; for example, churches were one of the few places where large, diverse groups could gather without attracting attention.[13] Even in regimes where autocratic rulers have remained entrenched and religious movements are not necessarily democratic in their outlook, religious communities may still pose threats to dictatorship as demonstrated by the 2007 Buddhist uprisings in Myanmar (Burma) and the role of Friday prayers in mobilizing opposition during the Arab Spring.[14] Thus, whether religious groups are dominated by the authoritarian state or leading the charge against it, the relationship is assumed to be antagonistic.

This leads to one final reason why religion may be a cause of concern for authoritarian power holders: religious ideas and identities are often closely associated with violence.[15] Religious beliefs, for instance, are the triggers for present-day communal conflicts across the authoritarian world, including violence in Afghanistan, Algeria, Chad, China, Egypt, Lebanon, Russia, Sri Lanka, and Sudan. Religious identities have also contributed to regime collapse. Recall, for instance, the disturbing precedent from the late 1980s and early 1990s when a tide of nationalism swept across the Soviet Union and minority movements pressed for greater rights if not outright independence. Many of these struggles for self-determination had strong religious overtones that hardened overtime and fueled violent conflict, as in the case of the former Yugoslavia.[16] The history lesson for authoritarian leaders is clear: religion should be suppressed or contained – and certainly never ignored.

Although there are many reasons to expect contention between religious communities and their authoritarian overseers, this book demonstrates that the relationship is not necessarily one of a predatory state penetrating and dominating religious communities. Nor is it one of subversive religious groups mobilizing against dictators and the current political order. Instead, I argue that across the authoritarian world, a dynamic process of exchange is at play such that innovative government officials and active religious leaders negotiate the rules that govern their relationship. Conflict can certainly emerge from this interaction, but there is also ample room for cooperation.

[11] Weigel (1992).
[12] Wittenberg (2006); Ramet (1998).
[13] Morawska (1987); see also Osa (1989).
[14] Hliang (2008); Patel and Bunce (2012); Toft, Philpott, and Shah (2011: 14, 214); also see Armanios (2012) on evangelical mobilization in Egypt.
[15] See, for example, Juergensmeyer (2003); Fox (2002); Lijphart (1977). Similarly, Monica Duffy Toft (2007) finds religious civil wars to be more violent, last longer, and reoccur more frequently than secular civil wars.
[16] See Beissinger (2003); Kahn (2000); Treisman (1997); Evans (1997a); Sells (1996).

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ARGUMENTS AND IMPLICATIONS

The central argument of this book is that even in repressive political settings, religious and regime actors have needs that converge in many ways and can develop mutually reinforcing and supportive relations. Although the interests of religious and political authority differ, each side has a set of resources at its disposal that can be offered to the other to minimize uncertainty and meet strategic needs. For instance, government officials may attempt to establish cooperative relations with religious communities as a means of preserving political power, governing more efficiently, and diffusing local conflicts. At the same time, religious leaders may seek vertical alliances with the regime to safeguard their survival, gain access to resources, and promote their spiritual agenda.

This book therefore moves beyond a domination-resistance explanation of religious-state relations and instead offers an interests-based theory of interaction. I argue that a combination of uncertainty, pressing needs, and transferable resources set the stage for unexpected and innovative partnerships to occur locally. When these conditions are present in authoritarian regimes, religious communities and their local overseers can be seen trading favors, offering promises of reciprocal support, and exchanging a variety of resources. Specifically, religious and political authority will bargain over the key issues of politics – namely, the distribution of money, power, and prestige. However, where these conditions do not apply, such as in extremely repressive regimes where there is no space for religious expression, in political contexts in which religious groups have already captured the state, or in locales where religious identities are linked to separatist movements, we would expect religious-state interaction to play out quite differently.[17]

This study of religion and authoritarianism seeks to make several contributions, both empirical and theoretical. The first is to detail the nature of religious-state relations in authoritarian regimes and the likelihood of conflict and cooperation between the two. Although it is widely recognized that religion and political authority interact, there is little empirical work that explores in a systematic or comparative way how these interactions take place across the authoritarian world and what the political consequences for those involved might be.[18] Therefore, one central task of this book is to theorize the conditions under which autocratic overseers support or suppress and politicize or depoliticize religious groups, and under what conditions they simply tolerate them.

[17] The central argument that religious and local regime actors choose cooperation over conflict should travel widely across the authoritarian world; however, this is not to suggest that context is irrelevant. The authoritarian club is diverse, and many regimes have wildly different political realities at the subnational level. Therefore, in deeply divided societies where religion overlaps with minority identity and Center-local struggles are ongoing, the arguments and analysis presented here may not apply.

[18] Notable exceptions include Grim and Finke (2011); Toft, Philpott, and Shah (2011); Marsh (2011); Gill (2008); Linz (1996 [2004]); Ramet (1998, 1992).

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A second and equally important task is to present a clear and detailed account of how different religious organizations attempt to protect and promote their interests and values within restrictive environments. In accomplishing these two tasks, this book both brings a much-needed comparative perspective to the study of state-society relations under autocracy and provides a rare window into the micropolitics of contemporary authoritarianism. This book also takes an important empirical step toward providing a more systematic understanding of the various points of contact between religious groups and the state, or what Jose Casanova calls the "deprivatization" of religion – in which religion abandons its assigned place in the private sphere and enters the undifferentiated public sphere.[19] This step not only advances our theoretical understanding of the complex and intertwining relationship between religion and the state, but in the process also highlights the changing boundaries between public and private and cultural and political arenas of cooperation and contestation under authoritarian rule.

This book is also squarely situated in the theoretical debates of comparative and international politics on authoritarian resilience and durability. More specifically, this book weighs in on important questions, such as the following: Do religious groups function as a constraint on or partner to authoritarian power holders? Is the growth of religious associational life an indicator of weakness or sign of impeding crisis for authoritarian elites? Do religious groups contribute to political liberalization or the strengthening of authoritarian rule? Can they play both roles at the same time?

In addressing these and other questions, the arguments and evidence presented here build on a growing body of scholarship that emphasizes the innovative nature of authoritarian leaders – that is, rather than relying solely on domination and coercion to remain in power, autocrats are creative and innovative stewards of their power.[20] This book reveals that within the authoritarian bag of tricks is also cooperation – an instrument that rarely makes the headlines but that political elites frequently use to solidify their rule.[21] The findings of this study contribute to this literature in three distinct ways. One is by studying authoritarianism locally and shedding light on the inner workings of the contemporary authoritarian project. Another is by adding cooperation to the toolkit authoritarian leaders use to channel regime interest and maintain, if not enhance, their powers. The third is by bringing two groups of neglected actors to the discussion – namely, religious communities and local government

[19] Casanova (1994: 65–6).

[20] See, for example, Koesel and Bunce (2013); Svolik (2012); Dobson (2012); Bueno de Mesquita and Smith (2011); Dickson (2011); Stockmann and Gallagher (2011); Hertog (2010); Lorentzen (2010); Wright (2010); Egorov, Guriev, and Sonon (2009); Gandhi and Lust-Okar (2009); Gandhi (2008); Shambaugh (2008); Brownlee (2007); Solomon (2007); Gandhi and Przeworski (2006); Lust-Okar (2006); Magaloni (2006); Albrecht (2005); Bueno de Mesquita and Downs (2005); Nathan (2003); Wintrobe (2001); Quinlivan (1999); Zartman (1998).

[21] But see Gandhi (2008) on cooperation in authoritarian regimes.

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officials – and in the process detailing how and why autocratic elites reach out to these unlikely allies to support the authoritarian project.

At the same time, the book encourages us to rethink some of the key assumptions about the role of civil society under authoritarian rule. Instead of functioning as a force for destabilization and political change, this study demonstrates how and to what extent religious communities function as a partner to authoritarian power holders. It suggests that we should not hastily assume religious communities, as members of civil society, provide a counter to authoritarian leaders. Nor should we assume a robust associational life is necessarily an indicator of regime weakness or will have a democratizing effect.[22] Rather, this book reveals that local religious-state interaction can indirectly reinforce the authoritarian status quo from the bottom up.

COMPARING AUTOCRACY, COMPARING RELIGION

This study is explicitly comparative in nature and examines the politics of religion within two large and resilient authoritarian regimes, Russia and China. A paired comparison of these countries is instructive for several reasons.[23] First, Russia and China are both authoritarian regimes of great theoretical and empirical significance. They are influential in their regions, in the larger authoritarian community, and on the global stage. Second, they are both "difficult cases" to expect collaborative and mutually empowering relations between religious and state actors. Not only do these countries share histories of communism and extreme hostility toward religion, but their recent religious revivals have also been closely monitored and managed by government authorities.[24] Over the past three decades, Moscow and Beijing have established legal frameworks outlining acceptable religious confessions and setting parameters on religious

[22] Levine (2008: 214).

[23] On paired comparison, see Tarrow (2010, 1999); Brady and Collier (2004). On the importance comparing China to other countries, see Kennedy (2011), especially chapter 1.

[24] Several recent studies have remarked on the diverse revival of religious practices in these countries. See, for example, F. Yang (2012); Chau (2011, 2005a); Goossaert and Palmer (2011); Marsh (2011); Madsen (2011, 2010); Fielder (2010); Ashiwa and Wank (2009); Frose (2008, 2004); Malashenko and Filatov (2005); Bays (2003); Filatov (2002); Kipnis (2001); Dunch (2001); E. Chao (1999); J. Liu, Luo, and Yan (1999); Ying (1999); Kääriäinen (1998); Gautier (1997); K. K. Chan and Hunter (1994); Greeley (1994); Hunter and K.K. Chan (1993). Also, see C. K. Yang (1961) for earlier discussions of religion in China. For more on communist campaigns to eradicate religion in the Soviet Union and China, see Goossaert and Palmer (2011); Froese (2008); Knox (2005); Z. Luo (1991). Attempts to suppress religion, however, are not confined to the communist period. During the republican era in China, political elites argued that the eradication of "superstition" was crucial to making modern citizens; see Nedostup (2009); Wah (2004). Moreover, the pre-communist periods in both Russia and China were characterized with state-supported religious monopolies, marginalization of religious minorities, and the rise of religious groups that sought challenge imperial rule. See, for example, Seiwert (2003); Spence (1996); Shek (1990); Ter Haar (1992); Harrell and Perry (1982); Chesneaux (1972).

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activities to ensure that religious groups align with regime interests. Religious policies have been written and revised to allow for greater religious expression while containing the expansion and limiting the independence of religious groups. Religious associational life is tolerated, but never as entirely independent or as an equal partner to the state.[25]

These same religious policies have also created an uneven playing field among religious actors across both countries. In Russia, federal laws have created a hierarchy of religions with the Orthodox Church regaining its pre-revolutionary position of power with full legal protections and access to special state subsidies. Other religious communities, such as Muslims and Jews, are classified in a second tier as "traditional religions," which grants them legal protection but limited access to government benefits. All other religious groups are relegated to a third tier of "foreign religions," receiving only a pro forma guarantee of freedom of worship and no state support. Here, the implication is that religious groups farther down the hierarchy are more likely to face marginalization from both the state and the protected Orthodox majority.

The Chinese state is considerably more restrictive. Government policies limit legal religious activities to five traditions – Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism – and the regime has institutionalized patriotic associations to oversee each religion. Religious communities operating outside of these faiths and state-sponsored associations have no legal protections, are subject to state persecution, and must often operate underground.[26] In addition, some religious traditions in China are viewed with greater suspicion than others. Christianity, in particular, is closely associated with national victimization during the late nineteenth century; whereas Buddhism, and to a lesser degree Taoism, have positioned themselves as having deep, historic ties integral to Chinese culture.[27]

A Russia-China comparison is additionally instructive because the management of religion in both countries is a local game.[28] Although Moscow and Beijing have introduced legal frameworks of religious activity, it is at the local

[25] See Marsh (2011); Fox (2008: 167–9, 189–91); Spiegel (2004); Potter (2003); Elliott and Corrado (1999); Witte and Bourdeaux (1999); Gunn (1999).

[26] There are several religious traditions operating outside of state-defined parameters in China; see F. Yang (2006). On underground Protestants, see Koesel (2013); Vala (2009); Wielander (2009); J. Yu (2008); Vala and O'Brien (2007); Kindopp (2004b); F. Yang (2005). On the Catholic Church, see Madsen (1998); Leung (1992). On popular religious communities, see Chau (2005a); Bruun (2003).

[27] On the cultural positing of Buddhism and Taoism, see Ji (2012–13: 21–22); Ashiwa and Wank (2009: 11–12); F. Yang (2004: 114); on Chinese victimization, see Gries (2007).

[28] There is considerable literature suggesting the importance of local politics in both Russia and China. See, for example, Gel'man and Ross (2010); Ruble, Koehn, and Popson (2001); Oakes (2000); S. Li and Tang (2000); Stoner-Weiss (1999); Petro (1999); Treisman (1999, 1997); Gladney (1998); Stoner-Weiss (1997); Goodman (1995); Jia and Lin (1994); Shue (1988).

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level where the political management of religion largely takes place – and as a consequence, where the relationship between the state and religion is defined. For instance, across Russia and China, it is local officials who grant permission for the construction of a new mosque, church, or temple; decide whether religious communities are eligible for state funding for the reconstruction of religious landmarks; and even determine whether religious activities, such as tent revivals and the public showings of films, are legal and protected by the law or "cultlike" and subject to suppression.[29] It is also the case that the strength of religious associational life is often the greatest at the local level – here religion is most embedded in the community, the distance to those in power is reduced, and religious actors have an increased possibility of becoming important political players.[30] Thus, religious-state interaction in these countries is most evident and observable locally.

Russia and China also share a number of differences that provide analytical leverage in explaining when and why religious and political authority cooperate or collide. To start with, they have distinct political cultures and belong to different "civilizations"; furthermore, their divergent pathways from communism have resulted in the development of very different types of authoritarianism.[31] Russia's sharp break with communism and dual transition toward liberal democracy and capitalism has been followed by what can best be described as a process of de-democratization under Vladimir Putin – economic and political power has been consolidated in the executive branch, one party has a monopoly on political institutions, opposition is rarely tolerated, elections are orchestrated rather than competitive, elected officials take their cues from the Kremlin, and civil society is kept on a short leash. Russia, in effect, has transitioned into a "competitive authoritarian" political system that maintains democratic procedures without true democratic practices.[32] In contrast, China has not deviated from classic authoritarian politics in the post-Mao era. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has maintained a monopoly on political power and ensured the continuity of borders by reimagining itself and deemphasizing the role of ideology.[33] Thus, Russia and China are both

[29] See Potter (2003); Elliott and Corrado (1999); Witte and Bourdeaux (1999).
[30] Brook and Frolic (1997: 11).
[31] Huntington (1993); Freedom House ranks Russia as "partially free" from 1991 through 2004 and "not free" from 2005 through 2013. During this period, China is consistently rated as "not free." Freedom House scores are available at http://www.freedomhouse.org (last accessed August 13, 2013).
[32] Levitsky and Way (2010); Taylor (2011).
[33] As Richard Madsen (1993: 183) reminds us, "even though the communist party still governs China, and may do so for quite some time . . . it is ideologically dead: it can no longer plausibly claim to represent a historical vanguard, and to stay in power it must adopt economic policies that contradict its basic principles." Also see Shambaugh (2008: 6) on the eclecticism of the Chinese state.

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similar and different – a combination that is especially useful for theorizing about religious-state interaction and generalizing across diverse authoritarian contexts.

COMPARING RELIGIONS, COMPARING CASES

The chapters that follow draw on twenty-eight months of fieldwork in Russia and China. A detailed discussion of the methodology, data collection, sources, and challenges of conducting research in authoritarian contexts is included in Appendix A. Because Russia and China are both large and plural authoritarian regimes, this study employs two additional levels of comparison: a within-country comparison of four cities – Nizhny Novgorod, Kazan, Shanghai, and Changchun; and an interreligious comparison of Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Taoism, Judaism, folk religions, and new religious movements. These additional layers of comparison provide four distinct advantages. One is to promote greater generalizabilty of the findings. A second is to control for country and regional variation. A third is to address in a more systematic way how and when political elites and religious groups cooperate and when and why cooperation breaks down. A final advantage is to evaluate which religious actors are most successful at establishing close relations with those in power and which religions are left behind.

The four cases in this study were selected because they vary on several dimensions, including the degree of political openness, local government autonomy, and religious composition.[34] In terms of the last factor, each locale has registered religious communities that operate alongside a number of unregistered ones. These are religious communities that, for various reasons, refuse (or are denied) registration from the state and operate without legal protections. In this study, interviews with unregistered groups are included, but they are far less systematic for understandable reasons and therefore less amenable to drawing generalizations. Thus, the arguments and analysis of the book are based primarily on religious communities operating in the public sphere – that is, religious groups that are registered or seeking registration with the state.

Among the four cases, Nizhny Novgorod, Russia (formerly known as Gorky), is located approximately 250 miles east of Moscow on the Volga River and is the capital of the Volga Federal District.[35] Because of its defense industries, Nizhny Novgorod was a "closed" city for both foreigners and citizens until the early 1990s. The city, however, remains an important industrial center with a focus on industrial fabrication, chemical production, and automobile manufacturing. The municipal government is elected but is largely dominated by the United Russia party (*Edinaja Rossija*) and maintains close ties to the

[34] On subnational comparisons, see Hurst (2010).
[35] The Volga Federal District is one of the eight federal districts of the Russian Federation established in 2000.

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