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Introduction

The rules of etiquette declare that religion and politics are topics that should be avoided in polite conversation. Perhaps this is because both engender strong, uncompromising opinions and can result in heated disagreements. This is certainly the case for opinions regarding the proper role of religion in government. Contemporary politics in countries across the world include spirited and often high-stakes debates over government religion policy ranging from debates over specific policies such as religious education in public schools to the larger issue of whether a state should in general support, restrict, or be neutral toward religion. These debates are complicated by the fact that there are differing opinions on what exactly is meant by neutrality toward religion, not to mention the proper religion for a state to support.

In this study, I take no position on any of these normative debates over the role religion *ought* to play on government. Rather, I focus on the question of what role religion *does* play in government. Specifically, I focus on 111 types of government religion policies in 177 countries between 1990 and 2008.

Nonetheless, these normative debates overshadow this study. This clash of opinions is fought not only within intellectual circles and debate clubs.[1] The question of how a government should relate to religion is a critical political issue that has been the object politics at all levels of government. This debate has involved the full range of legitimate political activity, including elections, lobbying campaigns, organized protests, and wrangling over policy within legislatures and governments. It has also involved most forms of politically motivated violence, including riots, terrorism, and civil wars. The government religion policies that are the object of this study are essentially the outcomes of these political struggles.

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[1] For a discussion of the role religion ought to play in government see, among others, Fradkin (2000), Mazie (2004), Morgenstern (2012), and Stepan (2000).

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In fact, I posit that each country is potentially an arena for this conflict. In particular, political secularism – which I discuss in more detail in Chapter 2 and define as an ideology or set of beliefs advocating that religion ought to be separate from all or some aspects of politics or public life (or both) – is competing with religion over this aspect of the public agenda. Each country has both people who think the state is not sufficiently religious and those who think it is not secular enough. Many of them take their opinions to the political arena to change government policy in the direction they desire. As a result, it is certainly difficult and arguably impossible for a national government to avoid the issue of religion. I call this view of state religion policy the *secular-religious competition perspective* (or, for short, the *competition perspective*), which I discuss in detail in Chapter 2.

The relevance of this debate is demonstrated by my finding that only 16.4% of the countries in this study had the same religion policy at the end of the study period as they had at the beginning. In most cases, these changes resulted in greater government involvement in religion. That is, the majority of countries were more involved in religion in 2008 than they were in 1990. Also, the overwhelming majority of the 111 types of state religion policy were more common in 2008 than they were in 1990. This is not to say that this increased ubiquity of government involvement in religion was monolithic. Some countries became less involved in religion, and some types of policy became less common, but these decreases are greatly outnumbered by the increases.

Put differently, state religion policy is an active policy area in most of the world, one that people care enough about to effect change in the overwhelming majority of the world's countries. I discuss these findings in detail in Chapters 3 through 6. As I discuss in more detail in Chapter 2, this finding also has significant theoretical relevance to the ongoing academic debate over the role religion plays in the public sphere.

This struggle between political secularism and religion is complex. One aspect of this complexity is the overlapping issues of support and control. Most countries that support religion also seek to control it. In fact, as I discuss in more detail in Chapters 3 and 4, support for religion often includes an element of control. Financial support, for example, usually comes with explicit or implied strings. This can result in religious institutions becoming dependent on or otherwise beholden to the government. Governments that support religion often draw the line between support and allowing religious institutions and actors to encroach on the prerogatives and power of the political elites. Conversely, as I demonstrate in Chapter 5, efforts to control religion are always combined with supporting it to at least some small extent. Perhaps this is because supporting religion is among the most effective strategies to make religious institutions dependent on the government, and thereby more subject to its control. Although this significantly complicates our ability to comprehend the contest between religious and secular political forces, accounting for this factor provides a better understanding of the nature of state religion policy.

As broad as a discussion of 111 types of religion policies across 177 states may be, the topic of this study nevertheless focuses on one aspect of religion and politics. Religion interacts with the political on multiple levels. The religious beliefs of individuals influence their political behavior. This is true of both policy makers and ordinary citizens who can influence politics through a range of avenues including voting and participation in political activities and organizations. Religious institutions and clergy can act as interest groups and lobbyists. In many cases, formal interest groups are formed around religious ideals. Many countries have religious political parties. All of these and other potentially religiously motivated or influenced actors are not the focus of this study. However, they nevertheless enter into this discussion because all of these actors can potentially influence government religion policy.

Furthermore, religion's many interactions with politics are only one aspect of the larger religious economy. Stark and Finke (2000: 193) define the religious economy as "all of the religious activity going on in any society: a 'market' of current and potential adherents, a set of one or more organizations seeking to attract and retain adherents, and the religious culture offered by the organizations(s)." Others, particularly Gill (2008), have explicitly expanded this concept to include the interactions between religion and politics. Thus, religion has a broad range of intersections with topics of interest to social scientists.

Why this focus on government religion policy? First and foremost, it is likely impractical, if not impossible, to include all aspects the religious economy into a single study of 177 countries. Such a study would need to include all interactions by all religiously motivated individuals as well as all religious organizations with all aspects of society and politics in all states in the world. This is not to mention that many individuals and organizations operate in an international context (Fox & Sandler, 2004; Sandal & Fox, 2013; Thomas, 2005). Nevertheless, this study is at least as broad as any other cross-country data collection of which I am aware, the broadest of which include Norris and Inglehart (2004) and Grim and Finke (2011).

Second, when limiting the scope of a study to the realm of politics, national governments are perhaps the most classic and important units of analysis. States remain the most powerful actors in both domestic and international politics. Their qualities of sovereignty and a monopoly of force give them a critical influence over the national religious landscape, which essentially allows them to set the rules of the game. Governments regularly declare official religions; choose one or some religions over others; regulate, control, and restrict religious organizations and practices within their domain; and single out certain religions for restrictions that are not placed on all religions within their territory. The outcomes of these policies have profound influences on the well-being and success of religions. Because of this, all other religious political actors tend to seek to influence state religion policy. This makes it a central aspect of religion and politics.

Third, the state as the unit of analysis is particularly useful given current political science methodology. Excluding surveys, it is the most common unit of analysis in quantitative research that allows any study using it to combine its results with other studies to produce significant results. In this study, I take advantage of this to examine interactions between state religion policy with factors such as economic development, religious demography, and levels of democracy.

Fourth, among all aspects of religion's interaction with politics, state policy is likely among the most straightforward to measure. States are easily identified, and, as discussed in more detail in the Appendix, there is no shortage of sources to identify state policy on religious issues. Also, despite each state's religion policy being unique, they are also comparable across states.

Finally, over the past decade, research on religion and politics has increased exponentially. However, cross-national data remain scarce. Grim and Finke (2006: 1) lament that "the study of religion is severely handicapped by a lack of adequate cross-national data. Despite the prominence of religion in international events and recent theoretical models pointing to the consequences of regulating religion, cross-national research on religion has been lacking." Since Grim and Finke introduced a new cross-national dataset on religious freedom in the article I quote, there have been no new major cross-national data collections on religion and politics of which I am aware that were not an update of an existing dataset. Thus, a contribution that focuses on this basic element of politics and religion – which, as I discuss in detail later, is itself an expansion of an existing data collection – is not only justified; it significantly increases the available cross-national data.

Goals and Objectives

This book has four central goals and objectives: presenting and categorizing state religion policy, identifying important trends in state religion policy, evolving a new perspective for understanding state religion policy, and identifying the correlates of state religion policy. I discuss each of these in more detail in the following subsections.

Presenting and Categorizing State Religion Policy

The first objective is to present Round 2 of the Religion and State (RAS2) project's data collection and in doing so provide a complete lexicon and taxonomy of state religion policy. I discuss the technical details of the project in the following section and focus here on how I present the data and findings in this study.

The Religion and State (RAS) project has identified 111 types of state religion policy, which can be divided into four categories. Three of these categories have several subcategories.

Official religion policy is a single 14-category variable intended to measure the broad parameters of a state's religion policy. The categories range from those states most hostile to religion to those that most strongly support a single religion. I discuss this variable in Chapter 3.

Religious support includes 51 types of state support for religion, which can be placed in seven subcategories: laws on relationships, sex, and reproduction; laws restricting women; legislation related to other religious precepts; the enforcement of religion; funding of religion; entanglement between government and religious institutions; and other types of support. I discuss these variables in Chapter 4.

Religious restrictions includes 29 ways in which the government restricts, regulates, or controls religion in general in a country. This means that these policies apply to all religions, especially the majority religion. These policies can be divided into four subcategories: restrictions on religion's political role; restrictions on religious institutions; restrictions on religious practices; and other forms of regulation, control, and restrictions. I discuss these variables in Chapter 5.

Religious discrimination includes 30 types of restrictions placed on the religious institutions and practices of religious minorities that are not placed on the majority group. This final aspect of the definition means that governments are singling out some or all religious minorities for treatment that does not apply to the majority religion. This makes it distinct from the previous category. These policies can be divided into four categories: restrictions on religious practices, restrictions on religious institutions and clergy, restrictions on conversion and proselytizing, and other restrictions. I discuss these variables in Chapter 6.

Although this study is intended to accomplish more than providing a simple listing and taxonomy of all the types of government religion policies that exist in the world, this, in my estimation, is of value in and of itself. To my knowledge, while some – such as Chaves and Cann (1992), Chaves et al. (1994), Gill (1999), Grim and Finke (2011), and Norris and Inglehart (2004) – have provided lists of some aspects of state religion policy, this is the first listing that is arguably complete. These previous studies all are based on what the authors considered to be important aspects of state religion policy.

In contrast, the 111 types of policy included in this study constitute all types of identifiable religion policies that exist in today's states. They are based on a comprehensive country-by-country evaluation of all 177 countries included in the study, which was used to build a list of all polices that were found.[2] Such a list has several advantages and uses. If applied to all states, it can help yield information on all aspects of government religion policy without advertently or inadvertently leaving any out. This allows one to draw conclusions regarding trends in state religion policy based on what is as close to complete information

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[2] I describe the full methodology for building this list in Appendix.

as possible. It also provides a map for future scholars studying the topic, whether they are using comparative or quantitative methodology. With a list of all extant policies in at least a few states, someone studying state religion policy in any context, be it a single state, a region, or globally, will likely produce a more comprehensive and accurate result. Knowing what to ask and where to look is of significant value.

In the context of this study, I posit that no previous study, including the previous round of the RAS project, has produced a comprehensive listing of state religion policy. Thus, simply listing and discussing this information can provide insights into state religion policy that have not previously been possible. The categorization element of this taxonomy provides further insight into which elements of state religion policy are common and becoming more common, as well as in which types of states this is true. For all of these reasons, I devote a large portion of this study to listing and discussing in some detail each of these 111 types of policies.

In addition, I examine a sampling of religion policies in depth. In Chapter 7, I examine state policies on religious education in public schools, restrictions on abortion,[3] and limitations on proselytizing and missionaries. All three of these types of policy are among the most common and complicated of the 111 types of policy examined here. This requires a more detailed examination than a simple accounting of whether such policies are present or not in a state. These policies are also the subject of intense contention, which makes them particularly poignant in examining tensions between political secularism and religious political actors.

When examining these 111 policies, I highlight the difference between official religion policy and actual religion policy. As discussed in Chapters 3 and 8, states set parameters for their religion policies in central documents such as constitutions and religion laws. While these parameters are correlated with religion policy in practice, the link between the two is less determinative than one might think. I show in Chapter 8 that only a minority of states with official separation of religion and state (SRAS) or secular policies actually follow them. Similarly, declaring an official religion, as demonstrated in Chapter 4, does not always lead to high levels of actual support for that religion. For example, Argentina, Bolivia, and Costa Rica all have official religions. However, by the RAS2 religious support measure, many countries without official religions, including Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, and Nigeria, support religion more strongly than these three countries. Another form of policy that is rarely followed thoroughly is policies of religious freedom. As demonstrated in Chapter 8, the majority of states that declare religious freedom in their constitutions still engage in religious discrimination, a clear violation of the principle of religious freedom.

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[3] Chapter 7 also includes a discussion of why I consider abortion an issue that is strongly identified with religion.

Again, this does not mean these declared policies have no impact. States that declare policies of SRAS or secularism, on average, engage in less support for religion. States with official religions, on average, support religion more strongly. States with religious freedom clauses in their constitutions, on average, discriminate less against religious minorities. The key term in these findings is "on average." There are numerous exceptions, and in the case of religious support, all states in the world with the exception of South Africa (since 2003) engage in at least some religious support, even if they have clear secularist or SRAS policies. This means any evaluation of state religion policy that relies only on official or declared policies will miss the significant variation in the actual policies of states within these broader categories.

Identifying Trends

The second goal is to take the 111 types of religion policy just discussed and use them to identify important trends. In Chapters 3 through 6, I include a discussion of each of the 111 policies, including how they have been shifting over time. Perhaps the most important trend I identify is that, as noted earlier, states are becoming more involved in religion. Specifically, between 1990 and 2008, most types of state religion policies have become more common, and this trend is common to the majority of the world's countries. Of course, this rise is not monolithic, and some states have discontinued some of their religion policies. Nevertheless, new policies and states increasing their involvement in religion greatly outnumber discontinued policies and states becoming less involved in religion. This examination of trends is not limited to questions of a general rise or fall in government involvement in religion. I also examine each policy and each category of policies to determine whether they have their own unique trends.

A related trend is the pervasiveness of state intervention in religion. As I argue in Chapter 2, there was a time when the majority of serious scholars believed that religion as a public influence would shortly be a thing of the past. This time has passed, and now, other than a few holdouts, most accept that religion is and will for the foreseeable future remain a significant public and political influence. However, there is no agreement on the extent of this influence. The findings presented here demonstrate that government involvement in religion is so common that countries avoiding such involvement are the exception rather than the rule, even among states that officially espouse secular ideologies.

In addition, I provide an analysis in Chapter 8 that examines how many states in practice meet the definition of being secular or having SRAS. I find that even among states that declare the state's secularity or SRAS in their constitutions, in 2008, depending on one's definition of SRAS and secularism, between none and 42.9% actually meet these standards. Thus, the evidence that states are regularly involved in supporting and regulating religion is strong.

Evolving a New Perspective for Understanding State Religion Policy

The third goal is to elucidate the secular-religious competition perspective (or competition perspective) and analyze its validity. Chapter 2 contains the main theoretical argument for why I posit that this perspective is essential to understanding the role of religion in today's politics. In brief, a significant element of contemporary religious politics is the struggle between political secularism and religious political actors. Although this is certainly not the only significant component of religion and politics, it is one that is essential to understand.

I evolve the competition perspective from secularization theory – the prediction that religion will inevitably decline or disappear in modern times. I argue that this prediction has proven to be false, which requires that the theory itself be discarded. However, much of the secularization literature that focuses on the modern challenges to religion is accurate. These challenges exist and are mostly either consequences or causes of the rise of secularism as an ideology. Secularism has been challenging religion in both the private and public spheres for centuries. These aspects of the secularization literature can be recycled into a new perspective on religion, politics, and society that uses them as a description of the causes, nature, and, to a limited extent, the results of this challenge.

In politics, secularism manifests as political secularism. Proponents of this ideology struggle to remove religion from the public sphere and, in extreme cases, also the private sphere. At the same time, religiously motivated political actors seek to accomplish the opposite. This competition exists to some extent in every state in the world, and although victories are possible, total and final victory is unlikely in the foreseeable future. I posit that the analysis in Chapters 3 through 8 of this study lends support to the argument that this secular-religious competition exists. It also demonstrates that, at least during the 1990 to 2008 study period, religion has been gaining more ground than political secularism in the arena of government religion policy.

Finding the Correlates of State Religion Policy

Finally, I seek to examine the correlates of government religion policy. Which types of states are more or less likely to engage in all the types of religion policies I discuss here? In Chapters 3 through 6, I examine the impact of a state's majority religion and world region. In Chapter 8, I add the impact of regime type, economic development, and demography to this analysis.

A Note on the "Arab Spring"

The "Arab Spring" is likely one of the most important events with regard to government religion policy in the past decade. It has the potential to be a turning point of similar importance as events such as the Iranian revolution and the fall of the Soviet Union. The Arab Spring consists of a number of active opposition movements in the Middle East, which began on December 18, 2010,

in Tunisia. At the time of this writing, these movements are or were recently active, in particular in Bahrain, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen. Although these movements have the potential to change many aspects of the regimes in these countries, I do not deal with these uprisings in this book because the analysis here is centered around the RAS2 dataset, which is current only through 2008. Also, even at the time of this writing, the influence of these movements on state religion policy is still unclear and perhaps waning. Libya and Syria are essentially in states of civil war, the outcomes of which are likely to be significantly different from the democratic goals of the Arab Spring movement. In both of these countries, it is likely that the new governments that emerge from these civil wars will either include or be dominated by fundamentalist elements that seek more extensive implementation of Sharia (Islamic) law.

Bahrain's government remains in power. In countries where the situation seems to be resolving itself, it appears that state support for religion in these countries will remain stable or increase. Egypt elected a new government that was dominated by the Islamic Brotherhood and Salafi parties, both of which advocate the imposition of Sharia law beyond its current status, in which elements of it, but not all of it, are enforced by the state. This government has been overturned, and its supporters are being suppressed at the time of this writing by a government that is similar to the one from before the events of the Arab Spring. The Islamist Ennahda party won the largest number of seats, but not a majority, in Tunisia's 2011 elections. As of September 2013, it had stepped down from power but still signals an increased role for Islam in Tunisia. The opposition movement in Syria is dominated by Islamists. Libya's civil war is primarily tribal, but Islamist forces will most likely play a significant role in any government that emerges.

It will likely be years before the Arab Spring's long-term results become apparent. However, in cases in which the status quo does not remain intact, all the potential changes in government involve placing Islamic religious parties in a position of greater power than they had in the past or perhaps governments that likely will increasingly seek to regulate Islam for fear of its potential political power. All of these Islamic parties support increased state support for Islam and enforcement of Islamic law. Thus, in the long run, the Arab Spring is likely to create changes in government religion policy consistent with the current trend of increasing government involvement in religion.

The Religion and State Round 2 Dataset

The RAS2 dataset is designed to code government religion policy. By *code*, I mean to convert actions taken by governments into variables suitable for quantitative analysis. It includes yearly data for 1990 to 2008 for 177 countries. This includes all countries with a population of 250,000 and a sampling of less populous countries.

The Religion and State Project

To fully understand the RAS2 dataset, a brief history of the RAS project is in order. The RAS project began in 2000 with the idea of developing and collecting cross-country state-level measures of state religion policy. Through a series of papers and grant proposals, I developed a list of government religion policies that resulted in a dataset consisting of 62 variables, using basically the same categories as described earlier, which covered 1990 to 2002. These indexes were expanded in Round 2, which was completed in 2011.

The data collection methodology, described in detail in Appendix, was similar for both rounds, but the construction of the list of variables included in the indexes was different. Round 1 of the data collection (RAS1) used a list of variables on the religion policies that the project staff, in consultation with numerous colleagues,[4] expected to find. In the early stages of the data collection for RAS1, variables were added as research assistants uncovered religion policies that had not been anticipated. However, approximately one-third of the way into the data collection process, the list was closed to changes because of the logistical difficulties of adding new variables. Adding new variables required going over all of the cases previously covered, which became untenable within the framework of the resources available to the project. Nevertheless, as new religion policies were discovered, they were incorporated into a working variable list for RAS2. Thus, as RAS1 was completed, a list of variables had already been developed for RAS2 that included all relevant government policies found to exist in practice. The data collection process for RAS2 revealed no additional policies that were present in a sufficient number of states to justify adding any new variables. Each index also includes at least one "other" variable for behaviors that are sufficiently important and relevant to be recognized but also sufficiently rare or unique that they do not warrant a separate variable.

This means that the variables included in the RAS2 indexes are based on a ground-up comparative project that uncovered all relevant extant government religion policies. All previous data collections of which I am aware, including RAS1 were, in contrast, based on what the researchers expected to find based on various theories and the experience of the researchers. This makes RAS2 uniquely capable of providing a comprehensive, detailed, and accurate picture of state religion policy across the world.

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[4] Although I did not keep precise records, I estimate that at least 25 colleagues were consulted. This includes 14 who commented on the grant proposals for the research, another 5 who commented on articles submitted to journals describing the proposed format for the research, and at least 6 who were consulted on a less formal basis and were specifically asked whether they could think of any variables that should be included that were not on the list. This pool expanded considerably after the completion of Round 1 to include referees for publications based on RAS1, audiences at presentations based on the data, and colleagues who showed an interest in the data collection.