

Editors' Note

It has often been at least the implicit assumption in studies of religion and politics that religion exists independent of the state. Religion in history and right, predates the state. As James Madison puts it in his Memorial and Remonstrance (1785), “This duty is precedent, both in order of time and in degree of obligation, to the claims of Civil Society. Before any man can be considered as a member of Civil Society, he must be considered as a subject of the Governour of the Universe: And if a member of Civil Society, who enters into any subordinate Association, must always do it with a reservation of his duty to the General Authority.”

While there is very strong evidence, including strong work in previous issues of this journal, that recognition of this truism manifests in a more peaceful civil society, adopting it as empirical reality may be less than fruitful. That is, religious actors do not act independently of political institutions and that is meant in a thicker way than saying free societies do “not bicker and argue about who killed who.”¹ Put differently, the role of political institutions is important not just in avoiding arguments, but by providing opportunities and changing calculations. That is what this issue is fundamentally concerned with – the interplay of religion and political institutions that shape the public presence *and* commitments of religious actors.

The strongest statement of this approach leads the issue as Ken Wald reopens the classic question about the “anomalous” behavior of American Jews – given their high socio-economic status, why are their politics so liberal? In this case, “the anomalies call our attention to the importance of the United States as a context in which Jewish political behavior takes a very different path than observed elsewhere.” In this classic formulation, a free society allows for the full diversity of religious and other expression, but Wald’s claim pushes further that American Jews have adopted voting attachments in order to support the maintenance of free society. The implications of this finding are profound; it, in his words, “counsels us to examine more carefully structural factors such as political regimes and the political attitudes of potential allies and opponents (which can be considered part of the political opportunity structure).

It amounts to bringing the state back in to the analysis of political behavior by religious groups.”

The second and third articles remain in the American case, following the trail Wald has laid out. Kilburn and Fogarty take on the timely inquiry about support for torture, while Hawley examines how attitudes toward Mormons affected the presidential vote in 2012. Though not quite stated in this way, both are wrestling with religion's independent influence on political behavior given political environments that have posed difficult questions. Religious authorities have taken (largely) unequivocal stands against the use of torture, so it is interesting to find that greater religious commitment tends to drive down support for torture and a religious identity, absent organizational involvement, drives up support for torture. Hawley finds that attitudes toward Mormons have weak effects overall, but do serve to weaken turnout among those whose prejudices serve to constrain choice (e.g., independents with cool toward Mormons); otherwise the attachments voters had to the party system trumped attitudes toward the Republican candidate's religious group. While this is probably not the case on which to make a claim for religious influence, it does raise questions about religion's ongoing presence in electoral politics – what do we make of religion's relevance if it is subsumed (or eclipsed) by partisanship?

The next three strong pieces take up the role of political institutions in shaping religion's presence and commitments in a comparative perspective. Yu Tao draws on survey data and case studies involving villages that were divided arbitrarily for administrative purposes to examine the role of religion affecting collective protest. The findings highlight the importance of institutions at a social network level – when political officials have access to social groups through shared memberships, protest is less likely and the government is more responsive. This helps to explain why religious groups are linked to collective action in some places but not others.

A tension with the regime plays significant roles in the articles by Güneş Murat Tezcür and Mehmet Gurses. Adapting theory from Toft, Philpott, and Shaw (2011), Tezcür examines religious groups' pursuit of human rights activism given how religious mandates interact with the regime. In stark comparison with Wald's examination of American Jews, human rights activism is more likely to emerge in states with conflictual relations between church and state, though Tezcür is examining the advocacy of religious majorities in states at arguably different levels of democratic consolidation. Gurses, on the other hand, looks internally

at Turkey to examine whether shared religious affiliation can bridge political divides. While Kurdish Muslims agree with Islamic brotherhood in principle, they are skeptical of its adoption by the Turkish state. That skepticism finds resonance in the article by Crines and Theakston, who document the consistent use of religious rhetoric among British Prime Ministers in “Doing God” in No. 10” and highlight the variable benefits to using religious discourse.

Welcome to issue 8(1). We continue to be thrilled with the articles we are able to publish and wish to thank you for submitting your best work to *Politics & Religion*. Please help continue to get the word out.

Paul A. Djupe
Angelia Wilson
Co-Editors

NOTE

1. Thanks to Andy Katz for reminding me of this classic Monty Python quote.