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# RELIGION, DEMOCRACY, AND THE “TWIN TOLERATIONS”

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Are all, or only some, of the world’s religious systems politically compatible with democracy? This is, of course, one of the most important and heatedly debated questions of our times. My goal is to contribute to this debate from the perspective of comparative politics. More specifically, as a specialist in political institutions and democratization, I intend to discuss three questions, the answers to which should improve our understanding of this critical issue.

First, what are the minimal institutional and political requirements that a polity must satisfy before it can be considered a democracy? Building on this analysis, what can we then infer about the need for the “twin tolerations”—that is, the minimal boundaries of freedom of action that must somehow be crafted for political institutions vis-à-vis religious authorities, and for religious individuals and groups vis-à-vis political institutions?

Second, how have a set of longstanding democracies—the 15 countries in the European Union (EU)—actually met these requirements, and what influential misinterpretations of the Western European experience with religion and democracy must we avoid?

Third, what are the implications of the answers to our first two questions for polities heavily influenced by such cultural and religious traditions as Confucianism,<sup>1</sup> Islam, and Eastern Orthodox Christianity—traditions that some analysts, starting from a civilizational as opposed to an institutional perspective, see as presenting major obstacles to democracy?

Before addressing these three questions, let me briefly give some

quotations from Samuel P. Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, an exceedingly influential statement of a civilizational perspective that represents a major competing perspective to my own institutional approach.

Huntington gives primacy of place to Christianity as the distinctive positive influence in the making of Western civilization: "Western Christianity . . . is historically the single most important characteristic of Western civilization."<sup>2</sup> For Huntington, Western culture's key contribution has been the separation of church and state, something that he sees as foreign to the world's other major religious systems. "In Islam," Huntington says, "God is Caesar; in [Confucianism,] Caesar is God; in Orthodoxy, God is Caesar's junior partner." After arguing that "kin cultures" increasingly support each other in "civilizational fault-line" conflicts and developing a scenario of a religiously driven World War III, Huntington warns: "The underlying problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam." Regarding Confucianism, he asserts that contemporary China's "Confucian heritage, with its emphasis on authority, order, hierarchy, and supremacy of the collectivity over the individual, creates obstacles to democratization." In discussing post-communist Europe, he says that "the central dividing line . . . is now the line separating the people of Western Christianity, on the one hand, from Muslim and Orthodox peoples on the other." He asks rhetorically, "Where does Europe end?" and answers, "Where Western Christianity ends and Islam and Orthodoxy begin."<sup>3</sup>

For Huntington, civilizations, not states, are now the key units, and he argues that due to the growing importance of "kin cultures" and "civilizational fault-line conflicts," the world's religious civilizations are increasingly unitary and change-resistant. Clearly, a central thrust of Huntington's message is not only that democracy emerged *first* within Western civilization but that the other great religious civilizations of the world lack the unique bundle of cultural characteristics necessary to support Western-style democracy.

If we approach the issue from an institutionalist perspective, will we arrive at a different view of the probable cultural boundaries of democracy?

## Democracy and Core Institutions

All important theorists of democratization accept that a necessary condition for completing a successful transition to democracy is free and contested elections of the sort discussed by Robert A. Dahl in his classic book *Polyarchy*. Among the requirements for democracy, Dahl includes the opportunity to formulate and signify preferences and to have these preferences weighed adequately in the conduct of government. For these conditions to be satisfied, Dahl argues that eight institutional

guarantees are required: 1) freedom to form and to join organizations; 2) freedom of expression; 3) the right to vote; 4) eligibility for public office; 5) the right of political leaders to compete for support and votes; 6) alternative sources of information; 7) free and fair elections; and 8) institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference.<sup>4</sup>

My colleague Juan J. Linz and I have argued that Dahl's eight guarantees are a necessary but not a sufficient condition of democracy. They are insufficient because no matter how free and fair the elections and no matter how large the government's majority, democracy must also have a constitution that itself is democratic in that it respects fundamental liberties and offers considerable protections for minority rights. Furthermore, the democratically elected government must rule within the confines of its constitution and be bound by the law and by a complex set of vertical and horizontal institutions that help to ensure accountability.

If we combine these criteria, it is clear that democracy should not be considered consolidated in a country unless there is the opportunity for the development of a robust and critical civil society that helps check the state and constantly generates alternatives. For such civil-society alternatives to be aggregated and implemented, political society, and especially political parties, should be allowed unfettered relations with civil society.

Democracy is a system of conflict regulation that allows open competition over the values and goals that citizens want to advance. In the strict democratic sense, this means that as long as groups do not use violence, do not violate the rights of other citizens, and stay within the rules of the democratic game, *all* groups are granted the right to advance their interests, both in civil society and in political society. This is the minimal institutional statement of what democratic politics does and does not entail.<sup>5</sup>

What does this institutional "threshold" approach imply about religion, politics, democracy, and the "twin tolerations"? Specifically, what are the necessary boundaries of freedom for elected governments from religious groups, and for religious individuals and groups from government?

Democratic institutions must be free, within the bounds of the constitution and human rights, to generate policies. Religious institutions should not have constitutionally privileged prerogatives that allow them to mandate public policy to democratically elected governments. At the same time, individuals and religious communities, consistent with our institutional definition of democracy, must have complete freedom to worship privately. In addition, as individuals and groups, they must be able to advance their values publicly in civil society and to sponsor organizations and movements in political society, as long as their actions do not impinge negatively on the liberties of other citizens or violate

democracy and the law. This institutional approach to democracy necessarily implies that no group in civil society—including religious groups—can *a priori* be prohibited from forming a political party. Constraints on political parties may only be imposed *after* a party, by its actions, violates democratic principles. The judgment as to whether or not a party has violated democratic principles should be decided not by parties in the government but by the courts. Within this broad framework of minimal freedom for the democratic state and minimal religious freedom for citizens, an extraordinarily broad range of concrete patterns of religious-state relations would meet our minimal definition of a democracy.

Let us explore this argument further by moving to our second question. Empirically, what are the actual patterns of relations between religion and the state in longstanding democracies? How have the “twin tolerations” of freedom for democratically elected governments and freedom for religious organizations in civil and political society been constructed in specific democratic polities?

### Western Europe and the Twin Tolerations

How should one read the “lessons” of the historical relationship between Western Christianity and democracy? Here I would like to call particular attention to four possible misinterpretations. *Empirically*, we should beware of simple assertions about the actual existence of “separation of church and state” or the necessity of “secularism.” *Doctrinally*, we should beware of assuming that any of the world’s religious systems are univocally democratic or nondemocratic. *Methodologically*, we should beware of what I will call the “fallacy of unique founding conditions.” And *normatively*, we should beware of the liberal injunction, famously argued by the most influential contemporary political philosopher in the English language, John Rawls, to “take the truths of religion off the political agenda.”<sup>6</sup>

When discussing the prospects for democracy in non-Western, “non-Christian” civilizations, analysts frequently assume that the separation of church and state and secularism are core features not only of Western democracy, but of democracy itself. For such analysts, a religious system such as Eastern Orthodoxy—where there is often an established church—poses major problems for the consolidation of democracy. Similarly, when an Islamic-based government came to power in Turkey in 1996, there were frequent references to the threat that this presented to Western-style secular democracy. Indeed, military encroachments on the autonomy of the democratically elected government in Turkey have frequently been viewed as an unfortunate necessity to protect secular democracy. Are these correct readings or dangerous misreadings of the lessons of the relationship of church and state in Western democracies?

To answer this question, let us undertake an empirical analysis of the

degree to which the separation of church and state actually exists in a specific set of Western countries, all of which for the last decade have satisfied Dahl's eight institutional guarantees and the additional conditions for a democracy that I have stipulated, and have socially and politically constructed the "twin tolerations." First, we should note that, as of 1990, five of the EU's 15 member states—Denmark, Finland, Greece, Sweden, and the United Kingdom (in England and Scotland)—had established churches. Norway, although not in the EU, is another European democracy with an established church. In fact, until 1995, *every* longstanding West European democracy with a strong Lutheran majority (Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, Finland and Norway) had an established church. Only Sweden has begun a process of disestablishing the Lutheran church.

The Netherlands does not have an established church. Yet as a result of heated conflict among Catholics, Calvinists, and secularizing liberal governments over the role of the church in education, the country arrived in 1917 at a politically negotiated "consociational" settlement of this issue. It permits local communities, if they are overwhelmingly of one specific religious community, to choose to have their local school be a private Calvinist or a private Catholic school *and* to have it receive state support.

Germany and Austria have constitutional provisions in their federal systems allowing local communities to decide on the role of religion in education. Germany does not have an established church, but Protestantism and Catholicism are recognized as official religions. German taxpayers, unless they elect to pay a 9 percent surcharge to their tax bill in the form of a Church tax (*Kirchensteuer*) and thereby officially become a member of the church (*Mitglied der Kirche*), do not have the automatic right to be baptized, married, or buried in their denominational church or, in some cases, may find it difficult to gain easy access to the church hospitals or old-age homes that receive state support from the *Kirchensteuer*. Thus the vast majority of citizens in the former West Germany paid the state-collected church tax.

What do contemporary West European constitutions and normal political practice indicate about the role of religious parties in government? Despite what Western analysts may think about the impropriety of religious-based parties ruling in a secular democracy like Turkey, Christian Democratic parties have frequently ruled in Germany, Austria, Italy, Belgium, and the Netherlands. The *only* EU member state whose constitution prohibits political parties from using religious affiliations or symbols is Portugal. Yet I should make two observations about this apparent anomaly. First, the article prohibiting the use of religious symbols by political parties in Portugal is a nondemocratic holdover from the constitution drafted in 1976 by a Constituent Assembly under heavy pressure from the revolutionary Armed Forces Movement and later revised (in 1982) to conform with democratic standards. Second, Portugal has a *de facto* Christian Democratic Party, the Centro Democrático

**TABLE 1—THE “TWIN TOLERATIONS”  
VARIETIES OF DEMOCRATIC PATTERNS OF RELIGIOUS-STATE RELATIONS**

RELATIVELY STABLE PATTERNS			RELATIVELY UNSTABLE PATTERNS
SECULAR, BUT FRIENDLY TO RELIGION	NONSECULAR, BUT FRIENDLY TO DEMOCRACY	SOCIOLOGICALLY SPONTANEOUS SECULARISM	VERY UNFRIENDLY SECULARISM LEGISLATED BY MAJORITY, BUT REVERSIBLE BY MAJORITY
<p>No official religion. Full separation of church and state. No state monies for religious education or organizations.</p> <p>Private religious schools allowed if they conform to normal academic standards.</p> <p>Full private and public freedom for all religions as long as they do not violate individual liberties.</p> <p>Religious organizations allowed to minister to their followers inside state organizations (such as the military and state hospitals).</p> <p>Religious groups allowed full participation in civil society.</p> <p>Organizations and parties related to religious groups allowed to compete for power in political society.</p>	<p>Established church receives state subsidies, and some official religion taught in state schools (but nonreligious students do not have to take religious courses).</p> <p>Official religion accorded no constitutional or quasiconstitutional prerogatives to mandate significant policies.</p> <p>Citizens can elect to have “church tax” sent to a secular institution.</p> <p>Nonofficial religion allowed full freedom and can receive some state monies.</p> <p>All religious groups can participate in civil society.</p> <p>All religious groups can compete for power in political society.</p>	<p>Society largely “disenchanted” and religion not an important factor in political life.</p> <p>Democratically elected officials under no significant pressures to comply with religious dictates concerning their public policy decisions.</p> <p>All religious groups free to organize civil society and to compete for political power, but have little weight or salience.</p>	<p>Antireligious tone in most state regulations (for example, teaching of religion forbidden in state <i>and</i> non-state-supported schools; no chaplains of any religion allowed in military organizations or state hospitals).</p> <p>Significant percentage of believers “semiloyal” or disloyal to regime.</p>

Social, which operates with full political freedom and is a member in good standing of all the international Christian Democratic organizations.

In the twentieth century, probably the two most “hostile” separations of church and state in Western Europe occurred in 1931 in Spain and in 1905 in France. Both of these countries, however, now have a “friendly” separation of church and state. In fact, since 1958, the French government has paid a substantial part of the cost of the Catholic Church’s elementary school system. Virtually no Western European democracy now has a rigid or hostile separation of church and state. Most have arrived at a democratically negotiated freedom of religion from state interference, and all of them allow religious groups freedom not only to worship privately but to organize groups in civil society and political society. The “lesson” from Western Europe, therefore, lies *not* in the need for a “wall of separation” between church and state but in the constant political construction and reconstruction of the “twin tolerations.” Indeed, it is only in the context of the “twin tolerations” that the concept of “separation of church and state” has a place in the modern vocabulary of West European democracy.

A similar caveat should be borne in mind concerning the concept of “secularism.” Discursive traditions as dissimilar as the Enlightenment,

**TABLE 2—THE “TWIN INTOLERATIONS”  
VARIETIES OF NONDEMOCRATIC PATTERNS OF RELIGIOUS-STATE RELATIONS**

STATE PRECLUDES NECESSARY DEGREE OF AUTONOMY FOR RELIGION IN POLITICS		RELIGIOUS GROUPS PRECLUDE NECESSARY DEGREE OF AUTONOMY FOR A DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT	
GOVERNMENT-IMPOSED ATHEISTIC SECULARISM	RELIGION CONTROLLED BY ELECTED GOVERNMENT OR QUASIDEMOCRATIC CONSTITUTIONALLY EMBEDDED PROCEDURES	ELECTED GOVERNMENT’S POLICIES SUBJECT TO VETO BY NONELECTED RELIGIOUS OFFICIALS	THEOCRATIC ANTISECULARISM
Right of private worship is forbidden or highly controlled. Right of religious groups to participate in civil society denied. Right of religious groups to compete for power in political society denied. No competitive elections held.	Virtually unamendable constitution declares state secular and gives state officials a major role in regulating public expression of religion. Right of religious groups to actively participate in civil society constitutionally subject to unilateral state control or prohibition. Right of organizations or parties related to religious groups to compete for power in political society constitutionally denied. Relatively competitive elections normally held. Right of private worship is respected.	Constitutional or quasi-constitutional prerogatives accorded to nonelected religious groups to mandate significant policies to democratically elected authorities. Virtually unamendable constitution declares official religion. Official religion receives state subsidies. Competitive elections regularly held. Right of private worship is respected.	Demos cannot participate in selection of highest religious authorities (and thus the highest political authority does not emanate from, and is not responsible to, democratic procedures). No permissible area of private or public life allowed that does not conform to dominant religion. Fusion of religious and political power under religious control.

liberalism, French republicanism, and modernization theory have all argued (or assumed) that modernity and democracy require secularism. From the viewpoint of empirical democratic practice, however, the concept of secularism must be radically rethought. At the very least, serious analysts must acknowledge, as Tables 1 and 2 make clear, that secularism and the separation of church and state have no inherent affinity with democracy, and indeed can be closely related to nondemocratic forms that systematically violate the twin tolerations.

The categories in Tables 1 and 2 are not meant to be exhaustive or mutually exclusive, but simply to convey the range of democratic and nondemocratic state-religious patterns. They show that there can be democratic and nondemocratic secularism, democracies with established churches, and even democracies with a “very unfriendly” separation of church and state. One obviously could develop many other categories. My central analytic point stands, however. If we are looking for the defining characteristics of democracy vis-à-vis religion, “secularism” and the “separation of church and state” are not an intrinsic part of the core definition, but the “twin tolerations” are.

### More Misinterpretations

Building upon our reading of the empirical context of such phrases as “separation of church and state” and “secularism,” we are in a



position to see why we should beware of three other major misinterpretations.

1) *The assumption of univocality.* We should beware of assuming that any religion's doctrine is univocally prodemocratic or antidemocratic. Western Christianity has certainly been *multivocal* concerning democracy and the twin tolerations. At certain times in its history, Catholic doctrine has been marshalled to oppose liberalism, the nation-state, tolerance, and democracy. In the name of Catholicism, the Inquisition committed massive human rights violations. John Calvin's Geneva had no space either for inclusive citizenship or for any form of representative democracy. For more than 300 years, Lutheranism, particularly in Northern Germany, accepted both theologically and politically what Max Weber called "caesaropapist" state control of religion.<sup>7</sup>

Extrapolating from these historical situations, numerous articles and books were written on the inherent obstacles that Catholicism, Lutheranism, or Calvinism place in the way of democracy because of their antidemocratic doctrines and nondemocratic practices. Later, of course, spiritual and political activists of all these faiths found and mobilized doctrinal elements within their own religions to help them craft new practices supportive of tolerance and democracy.

The warning we should take away from this brief discussion is obvious. When we consider the question of non-Western religions and their relationship to democracy, it would seem appropriate not to assume univocality but to explore whether these doctrines contain *multivocal* components that are *usable* for (or at least *compatible* with) the political construction of the twin tolerations.

2) *The fallacy of "unique founding conditions."* This fallacy involves the assumption that the unique constellation of specific conditions that were present at the birth of such phenomena as electoral democracy, a relatively independent civil society, or the spirit of capitalism must be present in all cases if they are to thrive. The fallacy, of course, is to confuse the conditions associated with the invention of something with the possibility of its replication, or more accurately, its *reformulation* under different conditions. Whatever we may think about Max Weber's thesis in *The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism*, no one who has carefully observed Korea, Taiwan, or Hong Kong would deny that these polities have created their own dynamic form of capitalism.<sup>8</sup> We should beware of falling into the fallacy of "unique founding conditions" when we examine whether polities strongly influenced by Confucianism, Hinduism, Orthodoxy, or Islam can emulate or recreate, using some of their own distinctive cultural resources, a form of democracy that would meet the minimal institutional conditions for democracy spelled out earlier in this essay.

3) *Removing religion from the political agenda.* In their theoretical

accounts of the development of a just society, contemporary liberal political philosophers John Rawls and Bruce Ackerman give great weight to *liberal arguing*, but almost no weight to *democratic bargaining*.<sup>9</sup> Rawls is particularly interested in how a plural society in which the citizens hold a variety of socially embedded, reasonable, but deeply opposed comprehensive doctrines can arrive at an overlapping consensus. His normative recommendation is that, on major issues of quasi-constitutional import, individuals should be able to advance their arguments only by using freestanding conceptions of justice that are not rooted in one of the comprehensive but opposing doctrines found in the polity. Following this logic, public arguments about the place of religion are appropriate only if they employ, or at least can employ, freestanding conceptions of political justice.

Rawls's argument is both powerful and internally consistent. Yet he devotes virtually no attention to how *actual* polities have consensually and democratically arrived at agreements to "take religion off the political agenda." Almost none of them followed the Rawlsian normative map.

Politics is about conflict, and democratic politics involves the creation of procedures to manage major conflicts. In many countries that are now longstanding democracies, both Western and non-Western, the major conflict for a long period of time was precisely over the place of religion in the polity. In many of these cases, this conflict was politically contained or neutralized only after long public arguments and negotiations in which religion was the dominant item on the political agenda. Thus in the Netherlands, as noted above, religious conflicts were eventually taken off the political agenda of majority decision-making by a *democratic—but not liberal or secular—consociational agreement* that allocated funds, spaces, and mutual vetoes to religious communities with competing comprehensive doctrines.

Achieving such an agreement normally requires debate within the major religious communities. And proponents of the democratic bargain are often able to win over their fellow believers only by employing arguments that are *not* conceptually freestanding but deeply embedded in their own religious community's comprehensive doctrine.

One can expect, therefore, that in polities where a significant portion of believers may be under the sway of a doctrinally based nondemocratic religious discourse, one of the major tasks of political and spiritual leaders who wish to revalue democratic norms in their own religious community will be to advance theologically convincing public arguments about the legitimate multivocality of their religion. Although such arguments may violate Rawls's requirement for freestanding public reasoning, they are vital to the success of democratization in a country divided over the meaning and appropriateness of democracy. Liberal arguing has a place in democracy, but it would empty meaning and history out of political philosophy if we did not leave room for democratic

bargaining and the nonliberal public argument within religious communities that it sometimes requires.

Let us now turn to exploring these general arguments in the contexts of cultures heavily influenced by Confucianism, Islam, and Eastern Orthodoxy.

### Confucianism: Caesar is God?

Most scholars of Confucianism would acknowledge that there are significant Confucian cultural components in Taiwan, South Korea, and Singapore. They would probably also say that the Confucian legacy was historically somewhat stronger in Taiwan and Korea than in Singapore.

Most scholars of democratization would acknowledge that Taiwan and Korea now meet the minimal conditions of democracy that I have cited. In my judgment, however, *no* important scholar of democratization would argue that Singapore meets even half of Dahl's eight minimal guarantees. Thus we can say that South Korea and Taiwan are above the threshold for identifying a country as a democracy, while Singapore is below it.

I argued earlier against assuming that any of the world's major religious traditions are univocal. If this argument is right, this means that, within what Huntington calls "kin cultures," we should be on the alert for struggles over meaning. When the former prime minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, attempted to appropriate "Asian Values" as a fundamental prop of his regime, he was challenged by President Kim Dae Jung of Korea and President Lee Teng-hui of Taiwan. In effect, they both said: "We are democratic. We draw upon some important democratic values found in the Confucian tradition. But you, Lee Kuan Yew, do not have a democracy in Singapore and you rationalize it by drawing upon some nondemocratic values within Confucianism. We are better democrats, and better Confucians, than you, so don't you dare attempt to hijack 'Asian Values.'"<sup>10</sup>

Kim Dae Jung's response succinctly underscores many of the core points of the argument advanced in this essay. He insists that Lee Kuan Yew's version of Asian values is little more than a self-serving excuse for authoritarian rule and devotes two pages to citing Confucian and neo-Confucian tenets that support democracy and legitimate dissent. He then talks of "Lee's record of absolute intolerance of dissent," says that Lee's Singapore is a "near-totalitarian police state," and concludes with an elegant rejection of what I have called the "fallacy of unique founding circumstances," asserting that "the fact that [democracy] was developed elsewhere does not mean it will not work in Asia."

The South Korean and Taiwanese presidents made normative and empirical distinctions that are crucial to modern democratic theory. At the level of the core defining characteristics of modern democracy, we

must not be relativists. Any country, in any culture, must meet the same institutional and behavioral requirements. Yet we must also recognize that within the world of democracies there are many subtypes with distinctive secondary characteristics: Some have a large state, some do not; some accept individual values and reject collective values; some accept individual values but also espouse collective values. Many of the secondary values that differentiate Korean and Taiwanese democracy from U.S. democracy (higher saving rates so that the family can look after their own aged, a somewhat more robust role for the state in the economy, and somewhat greater respect for legal authority) draw upon Confucian values, but none of these “Asian values” are necessarily antidemocratic. Indeed, as Presidents Kim Dae Jung and Lee Teng-hui repeatedly and correctly assert, they are part of the distinctive strength of their own subtype of democracy.

Let me close this section on Confucianism with some illustrations of the multivocality of its doctrine and the political struggle to appropriate its meaning. Simon Leys’s new translation of *The Analects of Confucius*, with 100 pages of valuable annotations, correctly points out that “state Confucianism repeatedly stressed the Confucian precept of *obedience* while obliterating the symmetrical Confucian duty of *disobedience* to a ruler if the ruler deviates from The Way.” Leys stresses other, less hierarchical sayings: “Zila asked how to serve the Prince. The Master said, ‘Tell him the Truth even if it offends him.’” Dissent is supported by the Confucian injunction, “A righteous man, a man attached to humanity, does not seek life at the expense of humanity; there are instances where he will give his life in order to fulfil his humanity.” Xun Zi, one of the great followers of Confucius, built upon the above injunction when he defined a good minister as one who “follows the way, he does not follow the rules.”<sup>11</sup>

Since rulers in the Confucian world strove for centuries to foster acquiescence by selectively emphasizing those elements of the Confucian corpus favoring obedience, the authoritarian legacy of state Confucianism will be diffusely present in new democracies such as Korea and Taiwan for decades to come. Yet this legacy has not prevented the emergence of democratic rule in these countries. Indeed, as we have seen, some of the most important political leaders in the new democracies of Taiwan and Korea have used components of the Confucian legacy in support of their struggle to deepen democracy.

### **Islam and the “Free-Elections Trap”**

There is an extensive body of literature arguing that many key aspects of democracy are lacking in the Islamic tradition. The lack of separation between religion and the state is seen as stemming from the Prophet Mohammed’s fusion of military and spiritual authority. The lack of space

for democratic public opinion in making laws is seen as deriving from the Koran, in which God dictated to the Prophet Mohammed the content of fixed laws that a good Islamic polity must follow. The lack of inclusive citizenship is seen as originating in interpretations of the Koran that argue that the only true polity in Islam is the fused religious-political community of the *Ummah*, in which there is no legitimate space for other religions. Certainly, with the rise of Islamic fundamentalism these claims have been frequently asserted by some Islamic activists. Especially in the context of the Algerian crisis of 1991–92, this gave rise to scholarly assertions that Islam and democracy are incompatible and to arguments in the West’s leading journals of opinion warning against falling into the “Islamic free-elections trap.” According to this view, allowing free elections in Islamic countries would bring to power governments that would use these democratic freedoms to destroy democracy itself.

Any human rights activist or democratic theorist must of course acknowledge that numerous atrocities are being committed in some countries in the name of Islam. In Algeria, both the military-state and Islamic fundamentalists are slaughtering innocents. Women’s rights are being flagrantly violated by the Taliban in Afghanistan. In the name of Islam, parts of Sudan have been turned into a killing zone. At the aggregate level, a recent attempt to document political freedoms and civil rights around the world concluded that “the Islamic world remains most resistant to the spread of democracy.”<sup>12</sup>

It is in this context that Huntington asserted that the West’s problem is “not Islamic fundamentalism but Islam.” Huntington’s vision of Islam’s future allows virtually no room for struggling democratic forces to prevail in some key Islamic countries. Indeed, democratic failure is almost “over-determined” in his world of authoritarian “kin cultures” and unstoppable cultural wars. How should empirical democratic theorists respond?

I think we should begin with my hypothesis that all great religious civilizations are multivocal. Although Islamic fundamentalists are attempting to appropriate political Islam, there are also other voices—in the Koran, in scholarly interpretations of the Koran, and among some major contemporary Islamic political leaders. For example, Sura (verse) 256 of the Koran states that “There shall be no compulsion in Religion.” This injunction provides a strong Koranic base for religious tolerance.<sup>13</sup>

Political activists, journalists, and even professors sometimes misleadingly equate Islam with Arab culture. They then assert *correctly* that there are no democracies in the Islamic countries of the Arab world, leaving the *false* impression there are no Muslims living under democratic regimes. In fact, however, a case can be made that about half of all the world’s Muslims, 435 million people (or over 600 million, if we include Indonesia), live in democracies, near-democracies, or intermittent democracies.

How do I arrive at the figure of 435 million? By looking at Islam in the entire world and including fragile, even intermittent democracies that may be under military rule at the moment (such as Pakistan) or have been under military rule in the recent past (such as Turkey). I thus include not only the 110 million Muslims in Bangladesh but also Pakistan's 120 million Muslims and the 65 million Muslims in Turkey. I also include India's 120 million Muslims, who have contributed significantly to Indian democracy and are one of the important voices in the world's multivocal Islamic culture. Finally, if we include the at least 20 million Muslims living under democratic regimes in areas such as Western Europe, North America, and Australia, we get 435 million. I believe that the inclusion of this Islamic diaspora is justified if we see Islam as an evolving, constantly changing global culture that is to some degree being "deterritorialized."

The big country that democratization theorists are watching most closely is Indonesia. With its estimated population of 216 million people, roughly 190 million of whom are Muslim, Indonesia is the world's largest Muslim country. Obviously, its attempted transition to democracy faces great obstacles: the worst case of what the economists called "Asian flu"; long-repressed regional demands for decentralization (secession, in the cases of East Timor, Aceh, and Irian Jaya); a constitution written in 1945 during the war of independence that is almost unusable for a democracy; and a military organization that has been centrally involved in national politics since the 1940s and has often exacerbated, or even incited, major communal conflicts. But will the fact that the country is predominantly Islamic significantly increase the chances of democratic failure or breakdown? I do not think there is strong evidence to support such a presumption.

Under Suharto's 32-year rule (1965–98), Indonesia was a military authoritarian regime that increasingly acquired patrimonial (even "sultanistic") dimensions in the 1990s. Islam was never a major part of Suharto's power base, however. Indeed, most analysts during the Suharto period did not consider Islamic fundamentalists as a major obstacle to future democratization.

In any attempt at democratic transition, leadership and organization are extremely important. The two largest and most influential Islamic organizations at the start of the possible transition in Indonesia, Nahdatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, both with over 25 million members, were led by Abdurrahman Wahid and Amien Rais, respectively, both leaders in the struggle against Suharto. Amien Rais played a key role in helping to keep the student protests mobilized, relatively peaceful, and focused on democratic demands. After Suharto's fall, he considered leading an existing Islamic political grouping but instead created a new political party, the PAN, that was not explicitly Islamist and included non-Muslims in its leadership.

Abdurrahman Wahid (now president of Indonesia) also created a new political party, the PKB, and throughout the 1999 electoral campaign he argued against an Islamic state and in favor of religious pluralism. Wahid often operated in informal alliances with the most electorally powerful

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***Against great initial odds, democracy is still on the agenda in Indonesia, two years after the fall of Suharto.***

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political leader, Megawati Sukarnoputri, and her secular nationalist party, the PDI, which includes secular Muslims, Christians, and many non-Muslim minorities. In Indonesia, Muslim identities are often moderate, syncretic, and pluralist. Muslim women in Indonesia have significantly more personal and career freedom than those in the Middle East. In this context, there was

at least some space for a leader like Wahid—despite his weakness as an administrator—to attempt to foster a transition to democracy by constantly arguing that tolerance was one of the best parts of Indonesia’s religious tradition.

Despite interethnic and religious conflicts, often tolerated and at times even supported by parts of the armed forces, no Islamic fundamentalist party developed a significant mass following in the year following Suharto’s fall. In June 1999, in the freest election in over four decades, the two leading Islamic fundamentalist parties, the PBB and the PK, polled only 2 percent and 1 percent of the total popular vote, respectively.

Democracy in Indonesia has certainly not yet become the “only game in town.” Outbreaks of religious violence on a number of the country’s more than 2,000 inhabited islands continue to cause dangerous tensions and breakdowns of law. Nonetheless, against great initial odds, democracy is still on the agenda in Indonesia, two years after the fall of Suharto.

Let us now turn to Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Turkey. All of them have, or recently had, military regimes, but in recent times they all at some time have been at or above the threshold of being democracies. The 1996 election in Bangladesh satisfied all of Dahl’s eight institutional guarantees. Voter turnout, at 73 percent (with women around 76 percent), was 13 percent higher than in any general election in the nation’s history. Interestingly, the fundamentalist Islamic Party (JI) trailed far behind three other parties, winning only 3 seats. The JI seems to have polled worst among women.<sup>14</sup>

Pakistan was founded by Mohammed Ali Jinnah as an Islamic republic and has some features of Islamic law in its constitution. It is important to stress two points, however. First, the most democratically troubling features of Islamic law were imposed under General Mohammed Zia ul-Haq’s military rule. Second, during the recent period of electorally competitive, civilian rule, there were no significant new impositions of

Islamic law. There was also some curtailment of the reach of Islamic law as the electoral performance of Islamic fundamentalist parties weakened.

Until the October 1999 military coup, there had been five consecutive elections in Pakistan since 1988. Did the results strengthen or weaken the thesis of an “Islamic free-election trap”? In increasingly competitive elections, the largest revivalist or fundamentalist Islamic party, the IJI, came in second in 1988 and won a plurality in 1990 and 1993. In 1996 and 1997, however, the total vote for all the Islamic fundamentalist parties combined fell to less than 15 percent. In the 1997 election, which observers considered the freest and most open of Pakistan’s recent elections, Islamic fundamentalist parties only won two seats in the National Assembly. In an excellent analysis of the relationship of Islamic revivalist parties and competitive elections in Pakistan since independence, S.V.R. Nasr contends that competitive politics, far from being a “trap,” actually “encourages the flowering of the diversity of Muslim political expression and prevents the reduction of the political discourse to revivalism versus secularism.”<sup>15</sup> Violent and fundamentalist Islamic groups are still active in Pakistan, to be sure, but their strength owes more to secret subsidies they receive from Pakistan’s notorious Inter-services Intelligence Agency (ISI) than to the votes they receive in elections.<sup>16</sup>

Thus Huntington’s implication that elections in predominantly Islamic countries will lead to fundamentalist majorities who will use their electoral freedom to end democracy gets no support from our analysis of electoral and political behavior in the world’s three largest Islamic countries. Even in Iran, the “free-election trap” thesis has recently been refuted by events. Although the theocratic hard-liners continue to control state television and to close opposition newspapers, and the “Council of Guardians” still vets all candidates, the antifundamentalist opposition won at least 70 percent of the vote in the 1997 presidential election, the municipal elections of 1999, and the parliamentary elections of 2000. Iran is thus becoming increasingly multivocal.

Let me conclude my reflections on Islam and democracy by briefly considering the case of Turkey and the questions it raises regarding secularism and democracy. From June 1996 to June 1997, Turkey had its first prime minister representing a *de facto* Islamic party, Necmettin Erbakan of the Welfare Party. Soon after Erbakan took office, the Welfare Party was accused of violating Turkey’s secular constitution. In the face of these charges and of pressure from the military, Erbakan resigned, and the Constitutional Court subsequently outlawed the Welfare Party.

Leading Western scholars have spoken as if there were a Western-style separation of religion and state in Turkey, sometimes suggesting that the policies promoted by Turkey’s founder Kemal Atatürk were



modeled on French secularism. In fact, however, the Atatürk tradition has been directed toward controlling religious expression so that it conforms with state goals. If Turkey really had either a complete separation of church and state or complete secularism, it would not need 50,000 civil servants in its Directorate of Religious Affairs to manage religious schooling.

The Turkish constitution of 1982 was drafted during a period of military rule by a committee vetted by the military. It was approved by a plebiscite, but no one was permitted to campaign against ratification. Article 2 asserts that the Turkish Republic is secular. Article 4 states that Article 2 can never be changed, not even by Constitutional amendment. Article 24 asserts that “education and instruction in religion and ethics shall be under state supervision and control,” and adds, in a clause used to ban the Welfare Party, that “No one shall be allowed to exploit or abuse religious systems.”

How does the operational definition of “secularism” drawn up by the military in 1982 and appealed to in the months leading up to Erbakan’s forced resignation in June 1997 compare with secularism as it is practiced in democracies elsewhere? I think it is clear that Turkey’s constitution is more restrictive both of freedom of religious expression within civil society and of freedom of organization within political society than that of any longstanding Western democracy.

I believe that in Turkey (as in Pakistan and probably Indonesia as well) the greatest obstacle to democracy is posed not by Islam but by military and intelligence organizations unaccountable to democratic authority. It has sometimes been suggested that in Islamic countries so many unique issues arise that democratization theory does not really apply. But our analysis of Indonesia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Turkey, and even post-1997 Iran demonstrates the pitfalls of focusing only on the problems for democracy related to Islam, while neglecting the overall sociopolitical, military, ethnic, economic, and international contexts.

### **Eastern Orthodoxy: A Strong Obstacle?**

What can we say about Eastern Orthodoxy and democracy? It must be acknowledged that Roman Catholicism and Protestantism played a more powerful role in recent civil-society resistance movements, especially in communist Europe, than did Orthodoxy. Why? And what does this mean, and *not* mean, for the future of democracy in countries where Orthodoxy is the dominant religion? The major explanation for this variance cannot lie in Orthodoxy’s core religious doctrine: For their first millennium, Eastern and Western Christianity shared the same theological doctrines. The critical differences in recent patterns of resistance to the state by Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism are due

more to their organizational forms and the parts of their common multivocal tradition to which they have given the most emphasis.

Let us look comparatively at the question of civil-society resistance. As a transnational, hierarchical organization, Roman Catholicism can provide material and doctrinal support to a local Catholic church to help it resist state oppression. To the extent that the Catholic church may resist the state, it can support a more robust and autonomous civil society. Juan J. Linz and I have analyzed how the Catholic church provided such support in Poland, Lithuania, Chile, Brazil, and (during Franco's last years) in Spain. Protestantism, with its emphasis on individual conscience and its international networks, also played a role in supporting civil-society opposition to a repressive state in East Germany and Estonia. In the 1970s and 1980s, Protestantism and especially post-Vatican II Catholicism chose to give important weight to the "prophetic mission" that calls for individuals to speak out against worldly injustice no matter what the consequences.

With respect to resistance to the state, Eastern Orthodox Christianity is often organizationally and ideologically in a relatively weak position because the church is a *national* (as opposed to a *transnational*) organization. In such "caesaropapist" systems, the state often plays a major role in the national church's finances and appointments. Such a church is not really a relatively autonomous part of civil society because, in Weber's words, there is a high degree of "subordination of priestly to secular power." Under Stalin, the role of secular power in the USSR often meant the participation of the KGB in the highest religious councils of Orthodoxy.

As Weber and others have emphasized, Orthodoxy places more stress on liturgy than action and encourages "quietism" as a response to the world. In the structural context of caesaropapism and the liturgical context of quietism, the "prophetic" response to injustice, while doctrinally available in Orthodoxy's multivocal tradition, is seldom invoked.

Despite all of the above, however, I do not believe that Eastern Orthodoxy is an inherently antidemocratic force. If the leaders of the state and political society are committed to democracy and follow democratic practices, Orthodoxy's caesaropapist structures and quietist culture should lead to loyal support of democracy by the Orthodox church, as has been the case in Greece since 1975. If the leaders of the state and political society are antidemocratic, however, the democratic opposition in civil society normally will not receive substantial or effective support from a national Orthodox church.

Let me illustrate these points by discussing the Greek case. Greece and the Greek part of divided Cyprus are the only Orthodox-majority countries that, for the last five years, have met all the criteria for democracy discussed earlier in this essay. From 1967 to 1974, Greece

was under authoritarian military rule. What was the role of the Orthodox church vis-à-vis the military dictatorship and the democratic transition? Three points are worth highlighting. First, there were two military juntas, one established in 1967 and one established in November 1973. Within months of coming to power, each junta had managed to arrange the appointment of a new archbishop to head the Greek Orthodox Church. This would have been impossible in Poland. Second, no scholarly work on the Greek dictatorship accords any significant formal or informal role to Orthodox church resistance to the dictatorship. Third, once democracy was instituted in 1974, the church (except for efforts to preserve some minor church prerogatives) did nothing significant to oppose, resist, or stall the eventual consolidation of democracy, and it has been broadly supportive of the democratic government. Indeed, the Greek Orthodox Church has been much less critical of left-wing democratic governments in Greece than the Catholic Church has been of left-wing democratic governments in Poland.

Greece has an established church. But as we have seen, so do Iceland, Denmark, Finland, Norway, and England. The democratic task in Greece after 1974 required not the disestablishment of the church, but the elimination of any nondemocratic domains of church power that restricted democratic politics. Greek democrats have done this and the Greek Orthodox Church has accepted it. Not only does democracy not require a disestablished church, it requires that no constraints be put on the rights of Eastern Orthodox Christians to argue their case in the public arena. Greek democracy has respected this area of legitimate autonomy of religion. There have been some changes both within state-society relations and within the Orthodox church that have made the “twin tolerations” easier to sustain. The constitution crafted in 1975 is somewhat clearer than the previous Greek constitutions had been about democratically appropriate areas for state action vis-à-vis religion, and for the established church’s action vis-à-vis other religions and the elected government. Moreover, there is growing sentiment within the Orthodox church that it would be religiously more robust and better able to play an independent role in civil society if it were less dependent on the state.<sup>17</sup>

### **Unfinished Business**

All the world’s major religions today are involved in struggles over the twin tolerations. For Hinduism in India and Judaism in Israel, religion-state conflicts are now especially politically salient. In the first two decades of their independence after World War II, India and Israel were under the political and ideological hegemony of secular political leaders and parties. By the 1990s, however, both these secular political traditions were challenged by opposition movements that drew some of

their support from forces seeking to redraw the boundaries of the “twin tolerations” to accommodate more fundamentalist and less tolerant visions of the polity.

In Israel, the state was originally a nationalist state for the Jewish people, but there are growing demands for it to be a religious state as well. There are also demands to make citizenship for the Arab minority less inclusive, and even to amend the Law of Return so as to give Orthodox rabbis the authority to determine whom the state of Israel recognizes as a Jew.

In India, after the 1998 and 1999 general elections, the Hindu revivalist BJP formed the government, in alliance with regional parties. Although it also contains more moderate elements, the BJP is pressured by its associated shock troops in uncivil society, such as the neofascist RSS, who want eventually to utilize the majority status of Hindus to make India a state that would privilege Hindu values as they interpret them.

A major force opposing the BJP and the RSS is the Gandhian-Nehruvian strand of Hinduism, which insists that both India and Hinduism are multivocal and that the deepest values of Hinduism must respect the idea of India as a diverse, tolerant state rather than a nation-state of Hindus. Gandhi and Nehru knew that since India was a multicultural, multireligious, and multicomunity state, “nation-state building” would make it harder, not easier, to build democracy.

India is 17 times poorer than any OECD democracy. The support for democracy in India under such difficult conditions cannot be understood without an appreciation of the tremendous strength that Gandhi drew from some traditional Hindu religious values and styles of action in his peaceful struggles for independence, democracy, an end to “untouchability,” and respect for Muslims.

If India, with 600 million non-Hindi speakers, 14 languages that are spoken by at least 10 million people, and a minority population of about 120 million Muslims, is to remain a democracy, the voices of those who wish to make India a Hindu and Hindi nation-state must be countered by an ever stronger Gandhian voice speaking for India as a multireligious home to a billion people.

A more complete study of the themes raised in this brief essay would not only discuss religions I have omitted, but would analyze in much greater detail the emergence of the twin tolerations in the West. The establishment of state-sponsored churches in Scandinavia and Britain, while initially a way of securing political control of the church, eventually led not only to the “twin tolerations,” but also, in the long run, to the “sociologically spontaneous secularization” of most of the population. Why?

Liberal scholars might also want to reconsider how liberal the anticlerical movements in France and Spain really were. What was the political effect of this liberalism from above? In Spain in the early 1930s,

did liberal and socialist anticlericalism justify the tearing down of walls separating civil cemeteries from Jewish cemeteries? If the 1905 French liberal model of expropriating Jesuit property had been followed in the United States, Georgetown and many other Jesuit universities would have been expropriated. Would this have contributed to the strengthening of liberalism in the United States?

Another important area for further research is the role of the state in generating religious toleration. Scholars, especially sociologists of religion, have focused their attention on society-led movements toward tolerance, but at some critical moments state-led policies, such as those structured by Emperor Ferdinand I at the Peace of Augsburg of 1555, were crucial for ending society-led religious conflicts. Likewise, it was the Ottoman state that crafted the millets, with their extraordinary tolerance for religious self-government by minority national religious communities. There are many more examples of state-led tolerance, as well as state-led intolerance, that we need to study.

Finally, even the separation of church and state originally mandated by the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment ("Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof") is misunderstood today by many U.S. citizens. The amendment did not prohibit the 13 original states from having *their own established religions*. It merely prohibited the Congress from establishing one official religion for the United States *as a whole*. In fact, on the eve of the revolution, only three of the 13 colonies—Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, and Delaware—had no provision for an established church. Even after the revolution, the South Carolina constitution of 1778 established the "Christian Protestant Religion." Four New England states continued for some time to maintain state-subsidized, largely Congregational, churches. The eventual political construction of the West's strongest wall separating church and state, along with the social emergence of one of the West's most churchgoing, and most fundamentalist populations, is yet another "crooked path" of toleration and intolerance that needs further study and reflection.

## NOTES

1. Confucianism is actually a cultural and philosophical tradition, not a religious tradition, in that it is "this-worldly" rather than "other-worldly" and has no priests or church. Nonetheless, many observers, from Max Weber to Samuel P. Huntington, treat it as one of the world's major religious-civilizational traditions, and I will do so in this essay.

2. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 70.

3. Quotations come from *Ibid.*, pp. 70, 217, 238, 28, and 158, respectively.

4. See Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), 1–3.

5. For a much more extensive discussion and for references concerning these additional criteria, see Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), ch. 1.

6. John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 151.

7. For Max Weber's discussion of caesaropapism, see Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, eds., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 1159–63.

8. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Talcott Parsons, trans., (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958). Weber, however, is careful not to commit this fallacy himself.

9. See John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*; and Bruce A. Ackerman, *Social Justice in the Liberal State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980).

10. For this exchange, see Fareed Zakaria, "Culture is Destiny: A Conversation with Lee Kuan Yew," *Foreign Affairs* 73 (March–April 1994): 109–29; Kim Dae Jung, "Is Culture Destiny? The Myth of Asia's Anti-Democratic Values," *Foreign Affairs* 73 (November–December, 1994): 189–94; and Lee Teng-hui, "Chinese Culture and Political Renewal," *Journal of Democracy* 6 (October 1995): 3–8. The quote from Kim Dae Jung is from p. 192 of his article in *Foreign Affairs*.

11. *The Analects of Confucius*, Simon Leys, ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997). For Leys' discussion of state Confucianism, see p. 108; for state Confucianism's obliteration of the symmetrical duty of disobedience, see pp. 134–36. The quotations are from pp. 136, 75, and 193, respectively.

12. Adrian Karatnycky, "The 1998 Freedom House Survey: The Decline of Illiberal Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 10 (January 1999): 121.

13. For examples of these voices, see the expanded version of this essay, "The World's Religious Systems and Democracy: Crafting the 'Twin Tolerations'," in Alfred Stepan, *Arguing Comparative Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming 2001).

14. See Yasmeen Murshed and Nazim Kamran Choudhury, "Bangladesh's Second Chance," *Journal of Democracy* 8 (January 1997): 70–82.

15. S.V.R. Nasr, "Democracy and Islamic Revivalism," *Political Science Quarterly* 110 (Summer 1995): 279.

16. See, for example, Sumit Ganguly, "Pakistan's Never Ending Story: Why the October Coup Was No Surprise," *Foreign Affairs* 79 (March–April 2000): 2–7. To be sure, there have been many unfortunate events in Pakistan, such as Pakistani covert support for the Taliban fundamentalist revolution in Afghanistan, but it would appear that the major source of such support was from the military and intelligence systems acting somewhat autonomously. Recent conflicts with India in Kashmir have a similar origin.

17. For a spirited analysis of how Orthodoxy, contra Huntington, is consistent with democracy and capable of politically significant internal change, see Elizabeth H. Prodromov, "Paradigms, Power, and Identity: Rediscovering Orthodoxy and Regionalizing Europe," *European Journal of Political Research* 30 (September 1996): 125–54.