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The many faces of the political god: a typology of religiously oriented parties

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Religion can influence party politics in several ways: directly, through the activity of explicitly religious parties; indirectly, both through the lobbying activity of institutional actors such as churches and religious non-governmental organizations, and through the influence of religious values on the manifestos of non-explicitly religious parties. However, although several studies about specific contexts exist in the literature, an exhaustive comparative typological analysis of the role of religion in party politics is still missing. One of the main obstacles to a thorough classification is the notion of “religious party” itself, which many reject since it proves too restrictive and is often perceived as carrying a normative meaning. This article therefore proposes a typology of “religiously oriented parties”, which includes not only explicitly religious parties, but also formally secular parties that have significant sections of their manifestos dedicated to religious values, explicitly appeal to religious constituencies, and/or include significant religious factions. The article offers five types of religiously oriented parties: the conservative, the progressive, the fundamentalist, the religious nationalist, and the camp types. Each type is examined through several variables related to political parties more broadly: their organization, their relation with interest groups, their ideology, their social base, and their impact on the quality of democracy and on democratization processes.

Keywords: religion; parties; classification; typology; democratization

The state of the art: party typologies

In the literature on political parties we essentially find two kinds of typologies: one based on their organizational structure and the other focused on their genesis and social base.

The first example of typology based on party structure is Weber’s distinction between parties based on local organizations of notables and parties based on wide bureaucratic machines. While intermittent election-based activity and a loose structure on the ground characterize the former, the bureaucratic type involves a thick organization also active between elections.¹ Later on, Maurice Duverger mirrored this dichotomy with the distinction between cadre parties and

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mass parties,² differentiating also between direct and indirect parties with the latter “made up of the union of the component social groups (professional or otherwise)”.³ Later elaborations highlighted changes in the structure of the parties after World War II. Otto Kirchheimer proposed a well-known thesis about catch-all parties, characterized by the drastic erosion of their ideological baggage, the strengthening of the leadership to the detriment of supporters, the attempt to secure access to a wide range of interest groups, and the appeal to different social classes.⁴ Other models put forward were Angelo Panebianco’s electoral-professional party, marked by the crucial role of specialists,⁵ Katz and Mair’s cartel party, marked by the increasing role of public funding for parties,⁶ and the “stratarchical” model, marked out by different kinds of activities at different levels of organizational unit.⁷

The second widespread approach to the study of parties is the genetic one based on Lipset and Rokkan’s work on social cleavages. According to this perspective, the different parties active in twentieth-century West European political systems were the product of four social fractures which emerged as a consequence of state centralization and the industrial revolution: church and state, centre and periphery, land and industry, and capital and labour.⁸ Building on this perspective, von Beyme elaborated the idea of “spiritual families” of parties (including, among others, the Christian democratic one).⁹ Another update to the cleavages theory has been proposed by Inglehart in his work on the emergence of post-materialist values. According to Inglehart, the fracture between materialist and post-materialist perspectives represents a new cleavage, responsible for the emergence of new families of parties such as the Greens.¹⁰

We can find mentions of religiously oriented parties more often in the less common typologies attempting to combine different criteria, mixing variables related to both the organization and the social base of parties: for example, Otto Kirchheimer’s, which includes four party models: the bourgeois party of individual representation, the class-mass party, the denominational-mass party, and the catch-all party.¹¹ The concept of the denominational party has been further developed by Gunther and Diamond in their typology, which takes into account “several different dimensions of party life involving the varying electoral strategies, social representation, principal objectives, and organizational capacities of parties”. The work

identifies 15 different “species” of party, each of which, in turn, belongs to a broader “genus” of party types: elite-based parties, mass-based parties, ethnicity-based parties, electoralist parties, and movement parties. Several of these genera are, in turn, separated into subcategories of “pluralistic” versus “proto-hegemonic” parties (separating loyal, democratic parties from semi-loyal or anti-system parties within democratic regimes), or into subcategories based on their level of commitment to an ideology or program.¹²

Gunther and Diamond take into account religious parties, categorized as mass-based parties with commitment to religion rather than to a secular ideology. In the pluralistic version, they are defined as “denominational-mass parties” and in the

proto-hegemonic as “religious fundamentalist parties”. According to Gunther and Diamond, this latter kind of party seeks “to reorganize state and society around a strict reading of religious doctrinal principles”. Accordingly, there must be no separation between religion and the state, and religious norms must be imposed on all citizens, irrespectively of their private religious beliefs.¹³ The typology also includes “ethnicity-based parties”, which are devoted to “promote the interests of a particular ethnic group, or coalition of groups”.¹⁴ As we will see, this concept can be helpful in the classification of religious parties created to exclusively represent a specific religious or ethno-religious community, separated from the rest of society.

Thus, both Kirchheimer’s and Gunther and Diamond’s works are notable exceptions in a comparative scholarship without many references to religiously oriented parties. The controversies connected to the concept of “religious party” (already accounted for in the introduction to this special issue) are largely to blame for preventing the development of a comparative literature on the subject. In addition, until the late twentieth century, the “secularization paradigm” hegemonized the social sciences, with religion thought of as a regressive factor, doomed either to disappear or to be relegated wholly to the private sphere.¹⁵ The scholarly dominance of the secularization thesis meant that religious parties were mostly dismissed as “opportunistic and not committed to electoral democracy [...] intransigently ideological, uncompromisingly militant, extremist”, as well as authoritarian, sectarian, and anti-modern.¹⁶

Although the claimed recent resurgence of religion¹⁷ has given rise to a wider and more articulated corpus of works on this topic,¹⁸ they are usually dedicated to the study of religious parties within a specific region and do not try to classify the phenomenon comprehensively. Among the most interesting subfields are the literature on Christian democratic parties in Europe¹⁹ and Latin America²⁰ and on religious and religious-nationalist parties in Israel²¹ and India.²² More recently, the literature on Islamist parties has also developed.²³ In some rare cases we find attempts at comparing parties belonging to different traditions/regions.²⁴

At best, in such literature we can find classifications devoted to single regions/cases and/or taking into account both political parties and other phenomena such as social movements.²⁵ Studies about the Muslim world, for example, often refer to a widely adopted distinction between radical and moderate Islamist parties, quite similar to the above-mentioned dichotomy between denominational-mass parties and religious fundamentalist parties proposed by Gunther and Diamond.²⁶ In Jillian Schwedler’s words, this distinction involves

moderates, soft-liners, or reformers, on the one hand, and radicals, hard-liners, or stand-patters (those unwilling to undertake reforms) [...]: moderates seek gradual reform within the existing system, while radicals seek revolutionary change often through the use of violence [...]: moderates work within the constraints of the existing political institutions and practices, while radicals seek to overthrow the system entirely, perhaps (though not necessarily) through the use of violence.²⁷

We can also mention the distinction between “political”, “missionary”, and “*jihadi*” Sunni groups made by the International Crisis Group,²⁸ the distinction between *takfiri*, local, or nationalist and moderate groups made by Tamara Cofman Wittes,²⁹ and the distinction between reformist, fundamentalist militant, tactical modernist, and strategic modernist made by Daniel Brumberg.³⁰ In studies about Jewish parties in Israel we can often also find a distinction between ultra-orthodox (or *haredi*) parties with a separatist attitude and nationalist religious ones.³¹

Since a comprehensive classification of religiously oriented parties cutting across different religions is still missing, the novelty of this contribution is the attempt to build such a typology, grounded in the more general literature on parties. In the next section, the article defines five basic types, showing how they differ from each other according to relevant criteria, such as their ideology, organization, relation with interest groups, and attitude towards democracy and pluralism.

Methodology and definitions

This special issue propounds the idea that the category “religious parties” is too narrow. It is also controversial, as there are only a few examples of parties that could unequivocally be identified as “religious”, and even they sometimes refuse to be labelled as such (sometimes out of strategic considerations to mark their independence from the religious institutions, as in the case of the Popular Party in early nineteenth-century Italy,³² and sometimes, as in Turkey, because of legal reasons due to the ban on explicitly religious parties³³). This article tries instead to sketch a tentative typology of “religiously oriented parties”, defined as political parties focusing significant sections of their manifestos on “religious values”, explicitly appealing to religious constituencies, and/or including significant religious factions. This typology does not see itself as exhaustive or watertight, but only as a first attempt to categorize a phenomenon that plays a crucial role across radically different countries and cultures, setting off new dynamic interactions in very diverse political systems. Given the paucity of comprehensive contributions on the subject, an attempt to systematize such presence is certainly necessary and can form the starting point of future investigations.

In this typology, five types of religiously oriented parties are classified according to six criteria: their organizational model, their ideology (and particularly their attitude towards democratic pluralism), their relation with interest groups, their social base, their goals, and their influence on democratization processes.

The typology conceptualizes ideal types, “formed by the one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view [...] not to be found anywhere in reality”.³⁴ In “real” politics, the parties do not exactly correspond to the ideal types identified in the typology, since they might share only some of the attributes of a particular type, and/or show features that cut across the attributes of different types. Therefore, this special issue mostly does not analyse empirical cases exactly

corresponding to the ideal types, but rather tries to define them according to the typology while at the same time trying to understand “the extent to which this ideal-construct approximates or diverges from reality”.³⁵

The typology also aims at producing a classification “both *exhaustive* and *mutually exclusive* [italics in original]”,³⁶ able “to minimize within-group variance, while maximizing between-group variance”.³⁷ It tries to do so by synthesizing the mainstream literature on parties reviewed above with other traditions of analysis that might prove helpful although not specifically dedicated to political parties: particularly, the *Fundamentalism Project*, drawing crucial distinctions related to the ideology of the movements (“fundamentalist” *versus* “fundamentalist-like”, such as, nationalist) and their attitude towards the world (classifying “world conqueror”, “world transformer”, “world creator”, and “world renouncer” attitudes).³⁸ Unlike existing classifications of religious parties, this article will also take into account cases such as the progressive and the camp type (according to Asher Cohen’s³⁹ definition these are parties devoted to the interests of a specific (ethno-)religious community rather than interested in putting forward a generalist ideology), mostly uncharted in the comparative literature, as well as cases of parties that are officially secular despite relying heavily on what might be understood as “religious values” to inform their stances and appeal to religious constituencies.

As for the choice of the names used to define the single types, they have been carefully chosen in order to avoid risks of reification.⁴⁰ Some are well-known categories already in use to define some families of parties. It is for instance the case of “conservative”, used here to define a party type focused on the defence of existing values and institutions, while taking at the same time a pragmatic stance and not characterized by a very detailed vision of the desired society.⁴¹ It is, as well, the case of “religious nationalist”, a term used in contexts such as India and Israel. The term “fundamentalist”, as in Gunther and Diamond’s classification,⁴² is applied here to define those parties with a primary focus on what they assert are “religious values” and a conflictual attitude towards the existing (secular) political system. Other names are less used in the literature. This is the case with the term “progressive”, used here in accordance with the definition of progressivism as an ideology supporting state intervention in defence of social and civil rights.⁴³ As for the “camp” type, it takes its name from the Israeli case, and specifically from Asher Cohen’s definition of “camp party” as a party concerned about the representation of a specific community, rather than about specific kinds of policies.⁴⁴ It is also inspired by the literature on ethnic parties⁴⁵ to which this party type partially resembles (Table 1).

Types of religiously oriented parties

Type 1: conservative

This type includes denominational mass parties that have evolved to show at least some features of (interdenominational) catch-all parties “appealing to all voters

Table 1. Typology of religiously oriented parties.

	Conservative	Progressive	Nationalist	Fundamentalist	Camp
Ideology	Based on religious values but encompassing non-religious issues and concerns	Socially oriented, sometimes with a Marxist orientation	Religious nationalist, based on the idea of supremacy of the group	“Total integration” ideology based on a particular interpretation of a religious message	Flexible, pragmatic attitude with some core religious values
Attitude towards pluralism	Accepting	Accepting	Conflict	Conflict	Separation
Organizational model	Catch-all	Cadre with limited membership	Mass, based on militias mixed with other organizational units	Mass, charismatic, based on wide membership and/or religious networks	Organization largely supplied by the social group and its institutions
Relation with interest groups (IGs)	Pragmatic involvement with different kinds of IG (but strong quasi-familial relation with some)	Strong cooperation with trade unions and other civil society IGs	Often dominated by religious nationalist social movements	Relation of integration with some religious organizations/groups	Integration with non-associational IG
Social base	Cut across class, but stronger among rural, traditional, older and less educated people	Educated urban middle class	People living in areas with a high level of conflict; bourgeoisie feeling threatened by other communities	People living in rural areas and urban shantytowns	Cut across class, within a single ethno-religious group
Goals	Maximization of electoral support while preserving some core religious values	Promotion of issues related to social justice and civil rights	Opposition to competing ethno-religious groups	Total transformation of the political and legal systems according to a religious ideology.	Defence of core interests of an (ethno-)religious group within a pluralistic environment

except convinced anti-clericals”,⁴⁶ such as Christian democratic parties (for example, Italy’s Christian Democracy, Spain’s Popular Party, Germany’s Christian Democratic Union,⁴⁷ Turkey’s Justice and Development Party – AKP⁴⁸ – and Tunisia’s *Ennahda*⁴⁹). It also includes conservative catch-all parties with strong religious factions able to influence their policy agendas as in the case of the USA’s Republican Party.⁵⁰ In particular, they engage with different kinds of interest groups,⁵¹ although usually preserving strong relations of cooperation with some religious institution and – especially in Europe – integration with religiously oriented organizations such as trade unions.⁵² For their activities, having developed autonomous networks of political activists, they no longer depend on religious institutions and their organizational networks (although these latter often support the party and play a significant role in campaigns).⁵³

Their ideology is based – usually explicitly or at times, as in Turkey, through cultural references – on the preservation of core religious values and “the passionate affirmation of the value of existing institutions”.⁵⁴ However, only part of their policies is inspired by religious values; they accept secular democratic institutions as well as social and political pluralism. Although they try to widen the role of religion in the public sphere, they do not aim at making it the only basis for state law and institutions.⁵⁵ Coherently with the general catch-all model, they are usually non-ideological and are quite flexible, unless they perceive existential threats against basic values and institutions. This pragmatic attitude is also a consequence of their attempt to maximize their votes in pluralistic and often officially secular societies, which renders necessary a cooperative strategy – on display at both the intra-party and the inter-party levels – of alliance with different groups, religious and non-religious alike. This cooperative attitude is shown also at the international level with agendas promoting cooperation and at times supranational integration.⁵⁶ In the economic field, although implementing charity activities and putting forward religiously inspired calls to social justice, they usually take pragmatic stances, often proposing free-trade economic policies that promote middle-class interests and often establish good relations with big capitalism.⁵⁷ In multi-party systems, they are usually open to alliances with a host of political forces of different ideological persuasions, as in the case of the Italian Christian Democracy⁵⁸ or the Islamist party *Ennahda* in Tunisia.⁵⁹

Because of the need to create broad alliances, the composition of the conservative party type is usually quite mixed, with different ideological strands and factions,⁶⁰ ranging from the nationalist right to moderate progressive factions, with a prevalence, however, of the socially conservative right. What holds them together is a vision of society where religious values are given a prominent role, although not a dominant and imposing one. Their mixed internal composition sometimes results in a fierce struggle – increased by the fact that the party is not totally in control of its core religious message⁶¹ – as in the case of the US Republican Party, but this can be tamed sometimes where charismatic rule prevails, as in Turkey’s AKP.⁶² Their constituency is also quite mixed, but usually includes large segments of the middle class, professionals as well as entrepreneurs. These

parties are stronger in small towns and rural areas rather than in big cities, although in poorer countries they may do well in impoverished slums surrounding urban areas.⁶³ The appeal of these parties among the poorer segments of the population – especially in societies traumatized by secularly oriented globalization processes – is sometimes also the consequence of an ethical stance marking this party type out when compared to other movements perceived to be more corrupt.⁶⁴ There is no doubt for instance that Islamist parties across the Muslim world thrive in part because of their anti-corruption message, as the case of the Moroccan Party of Justice and Development highlights.⁶⁵

Their overall impact on the quality of democracy⁶⁶ and on democratization processes is usually quite positive because they often promote the political socialization of rural and traditional masses previously not involved in politics and attempt to create social harmony, producing public policies that balance out different economic interests. The main shortcoming of this type of party when it comes to the issue of democracy and democratization is the tendency, in multi-party systems, to occupy the centre.⁶⁷ As it is shown by cases such as Italy's Christian Democracy, Turkey's AKP and the Ulster Unionist Party in Northern Ireland, this situation can prevent changes of government, with the possible consequence of stagnation (and sometimes corruption) as a consequence of long periods of uninterrupted power.⁶⁸

Type 2: progressive

This is the least common type of religiously oriented party since religious engagement in politics is more often associated to (centre-)right-wing ideologies and conservative values, while progressive politics is usually the monopoly of secular liberal and leftist forces that traditionally consider religion one of the main obstacles to the success of their vision of society. Thus, in many contexts this party model is absent – for example, in most of the Muslim world, in which non-leftist Islamic parties have a network of welfare provision entities themselves⁶⁹ – and, even in contexts where such parties are created, they are usually small, resembling the cadre party model rather than the mass and catch-all ones.⁷⁰ Indeed, religious progressive forces often rely on interest groups such as Catholic trade unions and associations in Europe and progressive churches in the US rather than on an organization of their own.⁷¹ Another reason why such parties are quite rare is that for those religious activists who have rather conservative moral values and at the same time are socially progressive when it comes to the redistribution of wealth, it is easier to be active in civil society movements without creating a specific party – as in the cases of some left-wing religious groups in Italy – or to be included in a wider umbrella party where their views are tempered in a wider environment.⁷² This latter option can result in a variety of choices ranging from engagement in wide (centre) left-wing parties (the Democratic party in Italy and the US), in centre parties (Christian democracy in Italy and Germany) and even in the nationalist right (the Nationalist Religious Party in Israel).⁷³

The ideological construct of these parties subordinates the desire to widen the role of religion in the public sphere – which plays a secondary role in their ideology and in the public policies they pursue – to a strong orientation for social justice, civil rights, and peace, framed in a pluralistic worldview. This drive towards social justice with religious undertones can be the result of the influence of some version of socialist thought – some strands of Latin American liberation theology, such as Nicaragua’s, come to mind,⁷⁴ as well as the experiences of “Buddhist socialism” in South-East Asia⁷⁵ and Israel’s Meimad party⁷⁶ – but can also derive from the emphasis on the more socially oriented planks of the scriptures,⁷⁷ as in the case of some progressive factions within Italy’s Christian democratic movement.⁷⁸ Accompanying these progressive social views are sometimes interventions on moral issues where the main argument is that they should be left to the individuals in so far as there is space for dissenting voices and behaviour. This should not be condoned, but targeted instead through education in order to realign to a religiously ethical order. However, this dual nature makes such movements highly unstable with strong tensions between the religious and the social planks of their ideology and policy choices. They usually do not have a particularly wide voters’ basin and find their main constituency among educated and urban middle-class people.⁷⁹

They usually make alliances with secular progressive parties, as in the cases of Israel’s Meimad’s alliance with the Labour Party and of Italy’s Margherita’s alliance with the Democrats of the left. In some specific regional cases, in which a larger number of religious people support a progressive social agenda, there have also been attempts, mostly resulting in failure, to build intra-party coalitions with other forces under the umbrella of a socially progressive ideology.⁸⁰ In any case, followers of religious progressive ideologies are often not well accepted in secular leftist circles where their religious ideology is not particularly welcome, or in the conservative and nationalist religious right circles, which largely reject their progressive orientation on socio-economic issues. This contradiction can also result in fierce internal and external ideological conflicts and schisms.⁸¹

Their impact on the quality of democracy and democratization processes is potentially positive, both because their emphasis on peace and dialogue can enhance social as well as international harmony, and because their mixed social-religious identity can contribute to bridge the gap between secular socialist and religious forces. This influence is, however, usually not crucial, since these parties rarely appeal to a large electorate and have limited social support. A significant drawback, evident in cases such as Northern Ireland and Israel, is that their ideology might include nationalist strands, which can hinder their role as dialogue-promoters.⁸²

Type 3: religious nationalist

These parties subordinate religious orientation to strong nationalist⁸³ sentiments and they are usually the product of social structures where ethno-religious

divides are particularly significant, such as India, Israel/Palestine, and Sri Lanka. They usually are organized as mass parties, although their size in the different contexts varies. Since they thrive in the militant struggle against opposite communities and movements, the peculiar unity at the foundation of their organization is the militia (usually, as explained by Duverger,⁸⁴ accompanied by sections and/or other organizational elements). In the case of India's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), there are real, formally structured, paramilitary units,⁸⁵ while in other cases, such as Israel's nationalist religious parties, the militias are informal, as the parties are based on the armed colonists' community.⁸⁶ At times such militias are only symbolic, as in the case of Italy's Northern League's "green shirts".⁸⁷ Thus, militias are associated to a mass structure and sometimes, as in cases of big parties such as India's BJP, to some features of the catch-all party at the strategic electoral level, as Jaffrelot's contribution to the special issue highlights.⁸⁸ They can be directly connected to religiously oriented social movements, which can sometimes dominate the party, preventing its moderation attempts from succeeding. At times, as the case of Israel's Kach illustrates, they can also have charismatic religious leaders. This is especially common in cases that border the fundamentalist model, which will be discussed later. The charismatic factor is an important part of the story of religious nationalist parties and it is usually much stronger than in the other party types except perhaps the fundamentalist one.⁸⁹

As for ideology, the main motives behind their creation and activism are usually connected to the struggle to control the physical space and public institutions against other (ethno-)religious communities. Where the state institutions are largely secular, as for example in Israel, these parties can also be involved in a parallel struggle against them – at least when they are controlled by forces not friendly towards the nationalist creed – to widen the role of religion in the public sphere.⁹⁰ Their discourse displays strong religious overtones with a sacralization of the motherland. In this perspective, the rival communities are perceived as an alien presence, whose "otherness" from the "local" culture is emphasized.⁹¹ Holy places obviously enjoy a privileged role as foci of major contention and deserve special emphasis.⁹² When it comes to public institutions these parties often promote controversial debates about the real foundations of the legal system and state secularism, as well as about specific issues, such as the separate civil code for Muslims in India.⁹³ They can support both free-trade and protectionist economic policies, since the economy is not usually among their main concerns, and in foreign policy they can take aggressive stances against states whose religious majority is perceived as an enemy. This would be the case of the BJP's attitude to Pakistan, of Israel's Jewish nationalists towards Arab states,⁹⁴ and of the Democratic Unionist Party to the Irish state. At times religious nationalist parties can decide to reach different social constituencies, but the bulk of activists and supporters usually include deprived social classes, as well as middle-class people that have lost or are afraid to lose their status or feel threatened by immigration.⁹⁵

In political systems, they are aligned on the conservative right (and not rarely the extreme right) of the spectrum and they are usually open to alliances with other nationalist forces, and sometimes with conservative ones, as in some Israeli cabinets. In some cases they can decide to merge with similar parties, as for example in Israel with the creation of the National Union in the late 1990s and the Jewish Home in the 2000s. These umbrella parties are however often short-lived, and prone to factionalism.⁹⁶ A partial exception to such generalizations is represented, again, by big parties, such as Israel's Likud and India's BJP, that have at times accepted to make alliances and/or form governments with different kinds of parties in order to seize and keep power.⁹⁷

Their overall impact on democracy and democratization is usually not positive for two reasons. First, they tend to display at times an ideology questioning some tenets of democratic values, especially in terms of pluralism, given the extremely competitive environment within which they are created due to the presence of different religious groups on the same territory or with claims on it. Privileging one's own religion and belonging over the rights of others is hardly conducive to compromise. Second, in democratizing contexts, their political activism usually results in an increase in social and political conflicts among ethno-religious communities, with an overall loss of stability and increasing volatility.⁹⁸

Type 4: fundamentalist

The fundamentalist party type is a mass party wishing to reorganize state and society around a specific interpretation of a religious message, turning religious law – or at least some religious ideology derived from a particular interpretation of it – into state law. As Gunther and Diamond explain:

[g]iven the far-reaching objectives of these parties (which may verge on the totalitarian), the organizational development of these parties and the scope of their activities are extensive. Member involvement and identification is substantial and even intense, and ancillary organizations establish a presence at the local level throughout society. [...] authority relations within the party are hierarchical, undemocratic and even absolutist, and members are disciplined and devoted. Religious fundamentalist parties mobilize support not only by invoking religious doctrine and identity, and by proposing policies derived from those principles, but also through selective incentives; they often perform a wide range of social welfare functions which aid in recruiting and solidifying the loyalty of members. This web of organized activities and services encapsulates members within a distinct subculture.⁹⁹

The parties in this category can also be connected to religious organizations with a broader appeal in society. Also, as a consequence of their welfare activities, they usually find their militants among frustrated and deprived people from middle–lower classes – usually living in rural areas and urban shantytowns – but sometimes also among highly ideologized middle-class people. As a whole, their existence is closely connected to the life and engagement of the charismatic leader: its loss usually results in schisms and internal disarray.¹⁰⁰

Unlike conservative parties, fundamentalist parties wish not simply to widen the role of religion in the public sphere. According to Neumann's classification, they are parties of "total integration" with "ambitious goals of seizing power and radically transforming societies, demanding the full commitment and unquestioning obedience of members".¹⁰¹ As a consequence, they have a strong anti-systemic orientation, and their commitment to democracy is at best questionable.¹⁰² This means that they might accept the pure mechanical procedures of democracy, but believe in very serious constraints in terms of liberal rights. Thus, it can be argued that they regard democracy as a means to conquer power (or at least get some public recognition for their issues), not as an end. In Brumberg's words, even when they choose to participate in the democratic institutions, they apply a strategy of "tactical modernism".¹⁰³ It is this contradictory stance towards democracy that makes them anti-systemic since were they to be voted into power, they might subvert democratic institutions and safeguards in the name of religious precepts.¹⁰⁴

Sometimes they exist only underground, finding it very difficult to be licensed to operate because they often have connections to violent groups. When they institutionalize, these parties are often closed down or banned, as the cases of the Welfare Party in Turkey¹⁰⁵ and *Ennahda* in Tunisia¹⁰⁶ demonstrate. They rarely choose to ally with other forces for a number of reasons, but primarily because they can rarely compromise and often display extreme versions of charismatic leadership. Both traits make them prefer to act alone.¹⁰⁷

The parties in this category can sometimes border with the nationalist religious type, as, again, in the case of Kach,¹⁰⁸ but might also undertake a trajectory of moderation, turning into a conservative party or creating a new one from the ashes of old experiences, as happened with the creation of the AKP in Turkey.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, the effect of a long-term democratic participation of fundamentalist parties is a hotly debated issue within the so-called inclusion-moderation literature.¹¹⁰

Type 5: camp

As already mentioned, the term "camp parties" derives from Asher Cohen's¹¹¹ work on Israel and identifies parties devoted to the interests of a specific religious community (which may coincide with a specific ethnic group, or may not) rather than interested in putting forward a generalist ideology. They are "typified by the fact that a particularly large majority of those affiliated with the 'camp' vote for that camp's party", and "by the lack of political competition over its adherents via the establishment of significant political alternatives".¹¹² As a consequence of this role, they are likely to get most of the votes within that community, irrespective of social class, gender, and other divides. The specificity of this party type, also in accordance with Gunther and Diamond's "ethnicity-based party"¹¹³ is that it finds its main *raison d'être* in preserving the identity of and the separation from the rest of the society of the group it represents: a separation that can be virtual or even, as in the case of the *haredi* groups in Israel, physical. The crucial difference of this

type and the nationalist and fundamentalist ones is indeed the separatist attitude of the party, aiming at granting and preserving some privileges of an (ethno-)religious group in a pluralistic environment, rather than engaging in conflict against other communities and/or the political institutions. We see some evidence in Northern Ireland in the Social Democratic and Labour Party and Sinn Féin's support for maintaining segregated education.¹¹⁴

This does not mean that such parties cannot evolve. For example, the *haredi* parties in Israel and the Tamil parties in Sri Lanka mostly moved towards the nationalist model, while in other cases – such as Lebanon's Hezbollah – the parties oscillate between different types.¹¹⁵ At times their group of reference can also change, as, again, in the Israeli case for the Sephardi Orthodox party Shas, which split in the 1980s from the previously interethnic orthodox party Agudat Israel.¹¹⁶ Their organizations and agendas are also very similar to the ones of ethnic parties, as the separatist religious communities they represent mostly act the same way as ethnic communities (even when they do not represent a specific ethnic group): “descent-based attributes”¹¹⁷ are crucial determinants of people's belonging to the group. As already mentioned, they virtually find their sole constituency within the group they represent and “unlike other types of political parties, electoral mobilization is not intended to attract additional voters outside the group”.¹¹⁸ Their organization, more similar to the cadre than to the mass model, heavily relies on the structures of the non-associational interest groups they represent and their social institutions, as well as on ad hoc organizations created by the party itself. Again, Shas' example, with its massive networks of charitable and welfare-oriented organizations, is relevant.¹¹⁹

Their political stances are usually not particularly codified and can be re-oriented according to the specific needs of the time, giving them a rather pragmatic attitude on many issues because ultimately they are focused on the defence of a specific community's interests, and need to appeal to a constituency belonging to different social classes or age cohorts. The same pragmatism emerges when it comes to their strategy of alliances, which can lead to cooperation with different movements, as long as they accept to grant some concessions to their community. In Israel, Shas has been involved in both left-wing and right-wing governments and in India both the Sikh party Shiromani Akali Dal and the Muslim party Jammu & Kashmir National Conference have been part of governments led by the Hindu religious nationalist BJP.¹²⁰ They often perform significant welfare activities in the community they represent, also creating and sustaining separate schools, media, and a host of economic activities, which can boost employment within the community.¹²¹ As mentioned, they can evolve as social divides also change, as in Israel, where a purely religious divide has turned into an ethno-religious divide.

Since such parties are ready to support different kinds of governments and mainstream policies, their influence on democracy cannot easily be evaluated. On the one hand, their emphasis on a specific identity can result in a lack of political socialization and in a deficit of integration within the wider social system, making it more difficult for their constituency to fully accept democracy.¹²²

Especially in contexts marked by the presence of different enclave communities such as India and Israel, this situation can favour the rise of opposed nationalisms and, consequently, implicitly contribute to hinder social harmony. On the other hand, some scholars contend that such parties can also have a positive influence on democratic stability, particularly in recently democratized regimes “if they are institutionally encouraged to compete on multiple dimensions”.¹²³

Concluding remarks and possible directions for further research

The party types outlined in this article are ideal types, which are not necessarily to be found in the real world and not in every context. In many cases we find real parties which fit quite well in the types proposed, while in other cases the correspondence is more blurred, with some features missing or overlapping. At times, we can even find “hybrid” cases that are difficult to categorize. It is the case, for example, of India’s BJP, which at least in some phases of its history (and at least at the strategic electoral level) has shown features of a catch-all conservative party with a secular orientation. It is also the case of some progressive parties active in countries with high levels of sectarian conflict, such as Israel and Northern Ireland, mixing a socially oriented attitude – often with socialist undertones – with strong nationalist feelings associated with a specific religious creed. Some Israeli parties also combine a nationalist religious identity with a fundamentalist one, in a way that makes it difficult to single out the predominant one. In other cases, as in Turkey, at the official level religiously oriented parties have often wilfully obscured their confessional identity for legal reasons. In addition, it should be highlighted that a number of large parties such as the Republican Party in the US, some Christian democratic parties in Europe and Latin America, India’s BJP, Tunisia’s *Ennahda* and Turkey’s AKP are complex entities, often including several different factions, from the social left to the nationalist right, which can have the upper hand at different times, thus changing the orientation of a party.

This leads us to another controversial feature of religiously oriented parties: the possibility of change, moving from one type to another, or even from a religiously oriented to a secular identity and the reverse, as in the cases of the US Republican Party, Italy’s Northern League, and Israel’s Likud and Beiteinu Israel, which were once secular parties that in time have accentuated their religious orientation rather instrumentally to catch new voters, or through internal changes that brought a different (more religiously oriented) leadership to the fore. In this article, as well as in the whole of this special issue, we see indeed that parties can switch type, sometimes from the fundamentalist to the conservative model, some others from the “camp” towards the nationalist one. In other cases, for example that of India’s BJP, the transition is purely tactical or, at least, made more difficult by the influence of a strong religious movement hovering over the party. Finally, at times there is even a trajectory of radicalization from the conservative to the fundamentalist model.

A general theory accounting for the role of religion in party change is, however, still missing and the hope here is that the typology of religiously oriented parties proposed might stimulate other scholars to try to improve and complete it, and to elaborate a wider theory about change processes and trajectories in religiously oriented parties.

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Notes

1. Weber, "Politics as a Vocation."
2. Duverger, *Political Parties*, 63–64.
3. *Ibid.*, 6–7.
4. Kirchheimer, "The Transformation."
5. Panebianco, *Modelli di partito*.
6. Katz and Mair, "Changing Models of Party Organization."
7. Carty, "Parties as Franchise Systems."
8. Lipset and Rokkan, *Party Systems and Voter Alignments*.
9. von Beyme, *Political Parties in Western Democracies*.
10. Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution*; Inglehart, "Values, Ideology and Cognitive Mobilization."
11. Kirchheimer, "The Transformation."
12. Gunther and Diamond, "Types and Functions of Parties," 9.
13. *Ibid.*, 21–22.
14. *Ibid.*, 22.
15. Swatos and Christiano, "Introduction – Secularization Theory"; Aldridge, *Religion in the Contemporary World*.
16. Rosenblum, "Religious Parties," 42.
17. Kepel, *La revanche de Dieu*; Casanova, *Public Religions*.
18. Kalyvas and van Kersbergen, "Christian Democracy."
19. Almond, "The Political Ideas"; Almond, "The Christian Parties"; Lyon, "Christian-Democratic Parties"; Galli, *I partiti politici europei*; Irving, *The Christian Democratic Parties*; Kalyvas, *The Rise of Christian Democracy*; Kalyvas, "From Pulpit to Party"; Warner, *Confessions of an Interest Group*.
20. Gill, *Rendering Unto Caesar*; Mainwaring and Scully, *Christian Democracy in Latin America*.
21. Greilsammer, "Campaign Strategies"; Newman, "Voting Patterns"; Sandler, "The Religious Parties"; Cohen, "Religious Zionism"; Cohen, "The Religious Parties in the 2006 Election"; Bick, "Fragmentation and Realignment"; Bick, "The Shas Phenomenon."
22. Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement*; Hansen and Jaffrelot, *The BJP*; Appiah, *Hindutva*.
23. Roy, *L'echec de l'islam politique*; Diamond, Plattner, and Brumberg, *Islam and Democracy*; Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*; Schwedler, *Faith in Moderation*; Hunter, *Reformist Voices of Islam*; Salih, *Interpreting Islamic Political Parties*; Akbarzadeh, *Routledge Handbook of Political Islam*.
24. Tepe, "A Pro-Islamic Party?"; Tepe, "Moderation of Religious Parties"; Hale, "Christian Democracy and the AKP"; Gaier, "Religious Parties"; Pushkar, "Do Religious Parties Undermine Democracy?"

25. Although sometimes the boundaries between political parties and social movements are “empirically fuzzy,” especially when dealing with so-called movement parties (Kitschelt, “Movement Parties,” 278), this article tries, as far as possible, to take into account only full-fledged political parties, really competing in elections, although sometimes very closely connected to religious groups and movements sharing part of the same organization.
26. Gunther and Diamond, “Types and Functions of Parties.”
27. Schwedler, *Faith in Moderation*, 8.
28. International Crisis Group, “Understanding Islamism.”
29. Cofman Wittes, “Three Kinds of Movements.”
30. Brumberg, “Rhetoric and Strategy.”
31. Aran, “The Father, the Son”; Sprinzak, *The Ascendance of Israel’s Radical Right*.
32. Galli, *I partiti politici italiani*.
33. Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*.
34. Weber, *The Methodology*, 90; Bailey, *Typologies and Taxonomies*.
35. Weber, *The Methodology*, 90.
36. Bailey, *Typologies and Taxonomies*, 3.
37. *Ibid.*, 1.
38. Almond, Appleby, and Sivan, *Strong Religion*; Riesebrodt, *Pious Passion*.
39. Cohen, “The Religious Parties in the 2006 Election.”
40. Elman, “Explanatory Typologies.”
41. Huntington, “Conservatism as an Ideology.”
42. Gunther and Diamond, “Types and Functions of Parties.”
43. Nugent, *Progressivism*.
44. Cohen, “The Religious Parties.”
45. Ishiyama and Breuning, “What’s in a Name?”; Chandra, “What is an Ethnic Party?”
46. Krouwel, “Party Models,” 258; Kirchheimer, “The Transformation.”
47. Bardi and Morlino, “Italy: Tracing the Roots”; Costa Lobo, “Parties and Leader Effects.”
48. Tepe, “A Pro-Islamic Party?”
49. Haugbølle and Cavatorta, “Beyond Ghannouchi”; Torelli, Merone, and Cavatorta, “Salafism in Tunisia.”
50. Vassallo and Wilcox, “Party as a Carrier of Ideas”; Oldfield, *The Right and the Righteous*.
51. Maisel and Berry, *The Oxford Handbook*; La Palombara, *Interest Groups in Italian Politics*; Lyon, “Christian-Democratic Parties.”
52. Thomas, *Political Parties and Interest Groups*; Zarcone, *La Turquie moderne*.
53. Kalyvas, *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe*; Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*.
54. Huntington, “Conservatism as an Ideology,” 455.
55. Gunther and Diamond, “Species of Political Parties.”
56. Kaiser, *Christian Democracy*; Van Hecke and Gerard, *Christian Democratic Parties*; Duran, “JDP and Foreign Policy”; Yavuz, *Secularism*.
57. Kersbergen, *Social Capitalism*; Shankland, *Islam and Society in Turkey*.
58. Galli, *I partiti politici italiani*.
59. Haugbølle and Cavatorta, “Beyond Ghannouchi”; Torelli, Merone, and Cavatorta, “Salafism in Tunisia.”
60. Boucek, “Rethinking Factionalism”; Belloni and Beller, *Faction Politics*.
61. Gunther and Diamond, “Species of Political Parties.”
62. Acar, “Turgut Özal”; Yavuz, *Secularism*.
63. Diamanti, *Mappe dell’Italia politica*; Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*; Wilcox, Larson, and Robinson, *Onward Christian Soldiers?*
64. Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*.

65. Wegner, *Islamist Opposition*.
66. The concept of “quality of democracy” is defined here according to the Economist Democracy Index, in relation to the categories: electoral process and pluralism, functioning of government, political participation, political culture, and civil liberties (Economist Intelligence Unit, *Democracy Index 2010*).
67. Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*.
68. Galli, *Mezzo secolo di DC*; Yavuz, *Secularism*. See also O’Malley and Walsh’s contribution in this special issue: O’Malley and Walsh, “Religion and Democratization in Northern Ireland.”
69. Moussalli, *The Islamic Quest*.
70. Wolinetz, “Beyond the Catch-All Party”; Koole, “The Vulnerability.”
71. Kalyvas, *The Rise of Christian Democracy*; Baccetti, *I postdemocristiani*.
72. Bedeschi, *Cattolici e comunisti*; Galli, *Mezzo secolo di DC*; Bick, “Fragmentation and Realignment.”
73. Baccetti, *I postdemocristiani*; Galli, *I partiti politici italiani*; Galli, *I partiti politici europei*; Bick, “Fragmentation and Realignment”; Blow, “Rise of the Religious Left.” See also Giorgi’s contribution in this special issue: Giorgi, “Ahab and the White Whale.”
74. Berryman, *Liberation Theology*; Dodson, “The Politics of Religion.”
75. Harris, *Buddhism, Power and Political Order*.
76. Guolo, *Terra e redenzione*.
77. Giammanco, *The Catholic-Communist Dialogue*.
78. Bedeschi, *Cattolici e comunisti*.
79. Bick, “Fragmentation and Realignment”; Baccetti, *I postdemocristiani*.
80. Mainwaring and Scully, *Christian Democracy in Latin America*. See also Luna, Monestier, and Rosenblatt’s contribution in this special issue: Luna, Monestier, and Rosenblatt, “Religious Parties in Chile.”
81. Giammanco, *The Catholic-Communist Dialogue*; Bedeschi, *Cattolici e comunisti*.
82. See Tepe’s and O’Malley and Walsh’s articles in this special issue: Tepe, “The Perils of Polarization and Religious Parties”; O’Malley and Walsh, “Religion and Democratization in Northern Ireland.”
83. The definition of nationalism used in this work regards it as an ideology built by an indigenous intelligentsia on the basis of some existing ethno-cultural local material, in order to oppose a threatening other (see Jaffrelot, “For a Theory of Nationalism”).
84. Duverger, *Political Parties*.
85. Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement*; Casolari, “Hindutva’s Foreign Tie-up in the 1930s.”
86. Sprinzak, *The Ascendance*.
87. Guolo, “Camicie verdi, quasi brune.”
88. Jaffrelot, “Refining the Moderation Thesis.”
89. Appleby, *Spokesmen for the Despised*; Mergui and Simonnot, *Israel’s Ayatollahs*.
90. Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism*; Sprinzak, *The Ascendance*; Tessler, “The Political Right in Israel.”
91. Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement*; Sprinzak, “Kach and Kahane”; Guolo, “I nuovi crociati.”
92. Gorenberg, *The End of Days*; Sharma, *Communal Angle in Indian Politics*; Ghosh, *BJP*.
93. Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement*.
94. Fox and Sandler, *Bringing Religion*.
95. Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement*; Sprinzak, *The Ascendance*; Guolo, “I nuovi crociati.”
96. Ozzano, *Fondamentalismo e democrazia*.

97. Hansen and Jaffrelot, *The BJP*; Guolo, *Terra e redenzione*.
98. Ozzano, *Fondamentalismo e democrazia*; Ozzano, "A Political Science Perspective."
99. Gunther and Diamond, "Species of Political Parties," 183.
100. Almond, Appleby, and Sivan, *Strong Religion*; Sprinzak, *The Ascendance*.
101. Gunther and Diamond, "Species of Political Parties," 169; Neumann, "Towards a Comparative Study."
102. Rosenblum, "Religious Parties"; Schwedler, "A Paradox of Democracy?"; Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*.
103. Brumberg, "Rhetoric and Strategy."
104. Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*; Schwedler, "A Paradox of Democracy?"
105. Ünsaldi, *Le militaire et la politique en Turquie*; Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*.
106. See Cavatorta and Merone's contribution in this special issue. Cavatorta and Merone, "Moderation through Exclusion?"
107. Ozzano, *Fondamentalismo e democrazia*; Ozzano, "A Political Science Perspective."
108. Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism*.
109. Atacan, "Explaining Religious Politics."
110. Wickham, "The Path to Moderation"; Schwedler, *Faith in Moderation*; Berman, "Taming Extremist Parties"; Yavuz, *The Emergence of a New Turkey*.
111. Cohen, "The Religious Parties in the 2006 Election."
112. *Ibid.*, 328.
113. Gunther and Diamond, "Types and Functions of Parties."
114. See O'Malley and Walsh's article in this special issue: O'Malley and Walsh, "Religion and Democratization in Northern Ireland."
115. Liebman, "Religion and Democracy in Israel"; Guolo, *Terra e redenzione*; Norton, *Hezbollah*.
116. Lehmann and Siebzehner, *Remaking Israeli Judaism*.
117. Chandra, "What is an Ethnic Party?," 154.
118. Ishiyama and Breuning, "What's in a Name?," 225.
119. Bick, "The Shas Phenomenon"; Liebman, "Religion and Democracy in Israel."
120. Ozzano, *Fondamentalismo e democrazia*; Bick, "The Shas Phenomenon"; Torri, *Storia dell'India*.
121. Liebman, "Religion and Democracy in Israel."
122. Ishiyama and Breuning, "What's in a Name?"
123. *Ibid.*, 228; see also Chandra, "What is an Ethnic Party?"

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