From Faith to Freedom:
The Role of Religious Actors in Global Democratic Progress

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Abstract: Examining all cases of global democratization between 1972 and 2009 (excluding countries with populations of less than 1 million, while including countries that made democratic progress but fell short of consolidated democratic perfection), the paper explores where and why religious actors made a pro-democratic difference. The analysis finds that religious actors played a significant supporting or leading role in more than half of all cases of global democratization in this period. Although the majority of the pro-democratic religious actors in these cases was Roman Catholic, the best explanation for their pro-democratic activity lies not in religious tradition or identity per se (Catholic v. Protestant or Christian v. Muslim, for example). Instead, the paper argues that the best explanation lies in a combination of two key variables: (1) the given religious actor's institutional or structural relationship to the state and (2) the religious actor's theology of politics and government -- its political theology. Where religious actors enjoy some instititutional independence from the state as well as a political theology that is at least compatible with liberal democracy, they are likely to play a democratizing role. The combination of these two factors -- a religious actor's proximity to power and its theology of power -- provides a robust explanation even of differences in political behavior between religious actors of the same religious tradition (for example, why Brazilian and Chilean Catholic actors were pro-democratic while Argentine Catholic actors were not for the most part) as well as offers a satisfying explanation of the so-called "democracy deficit" in the Muslim world.

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The reclusive Shiite cleric working out of an obscure Baghdad office was an unlikely freedom

fighter. Nearly 73 when the United States and its allies invaded Iraq in 2003, Grand Ayatollah

Ali al-Sistani belonged to Shiism's "quietist" school that rejected the political interventionism of

Khomeini and his revolutionary followers in Iran. Rather than plot the overthrow of infidel

regimes, the Grand Ayatollah normally busied himself with issuing *fatwas* on quotidian issues

such as whether it was acceptable to eat cheese imported from non-Muslim countries. This

political quietism changed when L. Paul Bremer, head of the post-invasion provisional authority

in Iraq, proposed a plan to draft a new constitution through an unelected council chosen largely

by the U.S. As Iraq's most influential Shiite cleric, Sistani issued a blunt, two-page *fatwa* in June

2003, declaring that such a council could not be trusted to "create a constitution conforming with

the greater interests of the Iraqi people and expressing the national identity, whose basis is

Islam."[2] Ultimately, Sistani's authority accelerated the handover to an interim Iraqi government,

and the staging of democratic elections in January 2005, which chose an assembly to oversee the

writing of Iraq's constitution.

While an Ayatollah was improbably militating *for* democracy in Iraq, a group of

Methodists was improbably militating *against* democracy on the other side of the world. As the

religious community of a majority of Fiji's indigenous inhabitants, the Methodist Church

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[1] This article is adapted from Monica Duffy Toft, Daniel Philpott and Timothy Samuel Shah, *God's Century: Resurgent Religion in Global Politics* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2011), Chapter Four.

[2] Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "How Cleric Trumped U.S. Plan for Iraq: Ayatollah's Call for Vote Forced Occupation Leader to Rewrite Transition Strategy," *The Washington Post*, November 26, 2003, Page A01.

considers itself the guardian of ethnic Fijian dominance over culture and society in the tiny archipelago of about one million people. Over the past three decades, prominent Methodist leaders, including the General Secretary of the Methodist Church, have supported a series of coups and dictatorships. One coup in 1987, for instance, which overthrew a freely and fairly elected government ruled dominated by mostly Hindu Indo-Fijians, was led by Lieutenant Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka, a prominent Methodist lay preacher who justified his actions through religious imagery and whose government came to proclaim Fiji as a "nation founded upon principles that acknowledge the deity and teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ."[3] While this religious invocation was not anti-democratic *per se*, it was regarded as the only way to avoid Fiji's alleged domination by non-Christians.

Two Questions

This article analyzes the relationship between religion and one of the most important political trends of the last half-century: the global progress towards democracy. The pro-democratic activism of religious actors like Grand Ayatollah Sistani and the anti-democratic activism of religious actors like the Methodist Church in Fiji raise two questions about this relationship.

The first question is empirical: What has been the overall role and involvement of religious actors in global democratic progress? Has the kind of pro-democratic activism undertaken by Sistani been common in those states that have experienced democratic progress, such as Iraq? Or has it been exceptional? In what scholars often term the "Third Wave" and the "Fourth Wave" of global democratization, numerous countries have made strides toward political

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[3] Lynda Newland, "Religion and politics: The Christian churches and the 2006 coup in Fiji," in Jon Fraenkel, Stewart Firth, and Brij V. Lal, *The 2006 Military Takeover in Fiji : A Coup to End All Coups?*, *Studies in State and Society in the Pacific, Nr. 4* (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2009), 189.; Paul Freston, *Protestant Political Parties : A Global Survey* (Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 64-67.

freedom since the early 1970s. According to Freedom House, for example, the number of "Free" countries doubled from 44 in 1972 to 89 in 2009, while the number of "Not Free" countries declined from 69 to 47 in the same period.[4] How frequently have religious actors – whether individual religious leaders such as Sistani or religious organizations such as churches or religious political parties – issued *fatwas*, organized rallies, published pastoral letters, or conducted open-air masses in the service of this global push toward democracy? At the same time, the anti-democratic activism on the part of the Methodist Church in Fiji, raises another question: In how many cases has an undertow of anti-democratic religious activism retarded or stopped progress to a more open and free society? To answer these questions we need a basic empirical landscape to give us an overall picture of the positive and negative impact of religious actors in relation to this global democratic trend.

The second question is explanatory: What explains the different, and sometimes contradictory, patterns of political activism on the part of religious actors? What explains the empirical variation we observe between pro-democratic religious activists such as Sistani and anti-democratic religious activists such as the Fijian Methodist Church? The question is all the more challenging because the variation clearly does not run neatly along putatively predictable religious or denominational boundaries but right through religious communities and traditions themselves. While Ayatollah Sistani has proven to be a force for democracy, Shiite Ayatollahs in neighboring Iran have often proven a force for tyranny. While Fiji's Methodist Church supported the military coup in 1987 and the ethnocratic authoritarianism that followed, the Methodist Church in South Korea organized prayer meetings and issued public statements against its military regime in exactly the same year, 1987, a period that proved critical in the country's

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[4] "Freedom in the World 2010: Global Data"; available at
http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/fiw10/FIW_2010_Tables_and_Graphs.pdf; last accessed on March 31, 2010.

democratic transition.[5] Why do different religious actors—often from the same religious tradition and at the same time—adopt such radically different positions and postures in relation to advancing democratic norms and procedures in their countries?

Answering these questions requires defining some key concepts. It is through a focus on "religious actors" that we operationalize religion in this article, and here we define a *religious actor* as any individual, group, or organization that (1) defines itself at least in part by religious beliefs or a religious identity and (2) that articulates a reasonably consistent and coherent message about the relationship of religion to politics.[6] This actor might well be a part of a larger religious entity or it might be a collectivity whose members themselves are not unanimous. This conceptualization contains an important implication for religious politics. Namely, it is not enough to ask which of the major world religions an actor belongs to in order to know its politics. As contemporary forms of Shiite Islam and Methodist Christianity demonstrate, every world religion also contains political diversity that is shaped by local context.

In our focus on the contribution of religious actors to democracy, we emphasize that our approach to defining *democratic progress* is unusual. The scope or our empirical interest is not restricted to "democratization" or "democratic transition" in the usual sense of a polity's

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[5] Joshua Young-gi Hong, "Evangelicals and the Democratization of South Korea Since 1987," in David H. Lumsdaine, ed., *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Asia*, in Timothy Samuel Shah, ed., *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in the Global South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 192.

[6] With philosopher William Alston ("Religion," *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 7 (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 140–145), we hold that what makes religious actors religious is their adherence to, and practice of, the following beliefs and behaviors: a belief in a supernatural being (or beings); prayers or communication with that or those beings; transcendent realities, including "heaven," "paradise" or "enlightenment"; a distinction between the sacred and the profane and between ritual acts and sacred objects; a view that explains both the world as a whole and humanity's proper relation to it; a code of conduct in line with that worldview; and a temporal community bound by its adherence to these elements. While some religions (such as Theravada Buddhism and Jainism) may be non-theistic, religions by definition claim to deliver insight into, and harmony with, the widest reaches of transcendent reality, including supernatural reality, which distinguishes them from political ideologies such as Marxism or nationalism. On the distinguishing features of religion and their universality, see also John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1980), 89-90.

complete and successful adoption of the full array of liberal-democratic norms and procedures. Instead, in order to expand our empirical universe as much as is reasonably possible, we consider all cases in which states with populations of one million or more took at least some measurable steps towards political democracy between 1972 and 2009.[7] Specifically, we hold that a state has taken such measurable steps when it has met *at least one* of three criteria: (1) its aggregate Freedom House political freedom rating has improved by at least three points; (2) its Freedom House category shifted either from "Not Free" to "Partly Free" or from "Partly Free" to "Free"; or (3) it undergoes a "double transition" to political independence as well as to some measure of political freedom following independence.[8] Returning to the cases of Iraq and Fiji introduced above, we find that Iraq's overall level of political freedom as measured by Freedom House improved by 3 points between 2002, the year before the fall of Saddam Hussein's Baathist regime, and 2009, while Fiji's overall level of political freedom has deteriorated substantially, losing six points as measured by Freedom House between 1986 and 2009.[9]

Defining democratic progress this way means we include cases of what is normally termed democratization—i.e. more or less complete democratic transition—as well as cases that fall well short of this endpoint. Such cases of partial democratization, often described under the rubric of "liberalization," are therefore of interest to us as well.

This more expansive definition of democratic progress is warranted for two reasons. First, "complete" democratization or democratic transition has proven far less common and

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[7] Thirty-two countries are excluded from our analysis because their 2009 populations are smaller than one million.

[8] For a discussion of the Freedom House Index, see the introduction by Künkler and Leininger of this Special Issue.

[9] Fiji's composite political freedom rating was 4 in 1986 (2 for Political Rights, 2 for Civil Liberties), deteriorated to 11 by the end of 1987 thanks to a coup (6 for Political Rights, 5 for Civil Liberties), improved to 5 by 1999 (2 for Political Rights, 3 for Civil Liberties), then drastically deteriorated once again to 10 by 2009 thanks to another cycle of coups (6 for Political Rights, 4 for Civil Liberties).

inevitable than some democratic "transitologists" have assumed. Either such "complete" democracies" exist only in our dreams, as Robert Dahl warned us to appreciate in the founding text of the democratization literature decades ago,[10] or all the democracies we call "complete" and "consolidated" nonetheless fall short in one way or the other no matter what we call them. Most important perhaps is the fact that even when they miss the mark of mature democracy, the strides toward political freedom we consider here have nevertheless generated incalculable benefits for millions—including an end to the most severe and torturous forms of repression— and warrant attention for that reason alone. Second, our approach allows for a maximization of the regional and religious variety of the case universe, yielding a far larger number of cases from all major regions and from the world's largest religious communities—Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam. Therefore, this approach strengthens the reliability of our comparative analysis.

The world has witnessed significant democratic progress over the nearly forty years between 1972 and 2009. This progress includes the surges of democracy often termed the "Third Wave" and "Fourth Wave" of democratization.

Table 1: Cases of Global Democratic Progress, 1972–2009

	ALL	AFRICA	AMERICAS	ASIA	EUROPE
Cases of Global Democratic Progress	78	24	15	15	24

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[10] Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).

Table 1 shows that between 1972 and 2009, 78 states have experienced democratic progress. Every region—Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Europe—includes a good number of countries that have experienced democratic progress. Africa and Europe have each seen two dozen countries move in a democratic direction, representing about half of the countries in each of those regions. The Americas and Asia have each seen 15 countries make measurable strides towards political freedom, which translates into about a third of Asia's countries and almost half of the countries in the Americas.

These waves of democratic progress have washed onto Muslim-majority shores as well. Some analysts have described the Muslim world as relatively inhospitable to democracy, and with some justification.[11] However, numerous Muslim-majority countries, such as Bangladesh, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Indonesia, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Turkey, have made democratic progress in the last forty years.[12] In fact, of the 78 countries that have experienced democratic progress between 1972 and 2009, 17—more than 20 percent—have Muslim majorities or Muslim pluralities.[13] This wave of democratic progress made inroads into the Arab Middle East as well. Iraq, for instance, has made measurable democratic progress in recent years and is one of the 78 cases noted in Table 1. Of course, the path to progress in Iraq is somewhat unique. Saddam Hussein's dictatorship was brought down by a multinational force led by the United States and the United Kingdom in 2003. But the country's arduous construction of democratic

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[11] M. Steven Fish, "Islam and Authoritarianism," *World Politics*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (2002), 4–37; Daniela Donno and Bruce M. Russett, "Islam, Authoritarianism, and Female Empowerment: What Are the Linkages?," *World Politics*. Vol. 56, No. 4 (2004), 582–607.

[12] Such cases are consistent with the arguments and evidence in Alfred Stepan and Graeme B. Robertson, "Arab, Not Muslim, Exceptionalism," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (2004),140–146.

[13] These countries, along with the net improvement in their combined Freedom House scores, are Albania (+8), Bangladesh (+5), Bosnia-Herzegovina (+5), Burkina Faso (+4), Guinea-Bissau (+4), Indonesia (+5), Iraq (+3), Kosovo (+5), Kuwait (+3), Kyrgyzstan (+3), Mali (+8), Niger (+3), Nigeria (+3), Pakistan (+3), Senegal (+6), Sierra Leone (+3), and Turkey (+4).

procedures and institutions—still incipient—is due largely to the efforts of a wide range of Iraqi groups, including religious actors such as Grand Ayatollah Sistani.

Although the particular circumstances that encouraged Sistani to assume a pro-democratic political role are unique, his activities were not. Religious actors have played a massive role in global democratic progress. In those countries that witnessed democratic progress between 1972 and 2009, pro-democratic religious actors were on the scene in well over half of them. As Table 2 indicates, religious actors were a pro-democratic force in 48 of 78 countries.

**Table 2: Cases of Democratic Progress* in which Religious Actors
Undertook Pro-Democratic Activity, 1972–2009**

	ALL	AFRICA	AMERICAS	ASIA	EUROPE
Total Cases of Democratic Progress	78	24	15	15	24
Cases of Democratic Progress in which Religious Actors Undertook Pro-Democratic Activity	**48**	**13**	**11**	**10**	**14**
Cases of Democratic Progress in which Religious Actors Undertook Pro-Democratic Activity		Benin (1989-91) Burundi (1998-2005) Congo-B** (1990-92) Ghana (1976-80, 1991-2000) Kenya (2001-03) Liberia (1996-97, 2003-06) Malawi (1992-94) Mali (1989-92) Mozambique (1989-94) Namibia (1987-90) Nigeria (1976-79, 1997-99) South Africa (1989-94) Zambia (1990-91, 2001-08)	Bolivia (1980-82) Brazil (1977-85) Chile (1987-90) El Salvador (1980-85) Haiti (1993-94, 2005-06) Guatemala (1982-86) Mexico (1995-2002) Nicaragua (1985-90, 1994-98) Paraguay (1987-91) Peru (1974-80, 1999-2001) Uruguay (1983-85)	East Timor (1998-2002) India (1976-77) Indonesia (1997-2005) Iraq (2002-09) Kuwait (1991-2006) Pakistan (1984-85, 2007-09) Philippines (1983-86) South Korea (1983-88) Taiwan (1986-96) Turkey (1980-87, 2001-04)	Bosnia-Herzegovina (1995-2006) Croatia (1999-2001) Czech Republic (1991-93) East Germany (1989-90) Kosovo (2007-09) Lithuania (1990-91) Poland (1988-90) Portugal (1973-76) Romania (1989-92) Serbia (1999-2006) Slovakia (1992-94) Slovenia (1990-92) Spain (1975-77) Ukraine (1990-91, 2003-06)

* "Cases of democratic progress" refer to nation-states that took at least some measurable steps towards political democracy, as defined in the text, during the period indicated in parentheses.
**Congo-B is the Republic of the Congo, also sometimes known as Congo-Brazzaville (for its capital city, Brazzaville), and is to be distinguished from the Democratic Republic of the Congo or Congo-Kinshasa (for its capital city, Kinshasa).

Before proceeding further into the data analysis, a few clarifications are in order. First, the

cases of democratic progress enumerated here refer only to *those states* in which at least one

religious actor supported or lobbied for democratic progress. The unit of analysis here is the

country, not the religious actor. In several of these 48 country cases, such as Kenya, South

Africa, and South Korea, multiple religious actors from diverse religious traditions undertook pro-democratic activity. Second, the claim that religious actors worked to promote democratic progress does not mean that these actors were the most decisive factor—or causally a decisive factor at all—in generating democratic political change (or that *all* religious actors promoted democratization). Rather, our analysis at this stage addresses the first major question posed earlier: As a basic empirical matter, how widely have religious actors undertaken some substantial, documented activity in favor of democratic progress? Specifically, we classify religious actors as pro-democratic if they undertook at least one of the following five types of political activity in a deliberate, organized, and sustained manner:

(1) *Protest or organized opposition to an authoritarian government or protest or organized support in favor of democratic procedures, norms, or institutions.* An example is the street demonstrations for democracy by Burmese Buddhist monks in 2007.

(2) *A religious ceremony or program that bears anti-authoritarian implications.* A defining example here is the open air masses that Pope John Paul II conducted for hundreds of thousands of Poles over the course of three pilgrimages to Communist Poland beginning in 1979. Poles clearly understood that the human rights references in the Pope's homilies were directed at them and their autocratic overseers.

(3) *Coordination and cooperation with international or transnational actors to weaken an authoritarian government or strengthen a transitional democratic government.* The Vicariate of Solidarity, a human rights organization formed and led by the Catholic

Church in Chile under the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, received support from 41 humanitarian and religious organizations around the world.[14]

(4) *Active encouragement or support of domestic opposition groups and actors*. Turkey's Islamic Justice and Development Party, for instance, formed a coalition with other parties and important groups in order to make its way into power in 2002.

(5) *Mediation or brokering of negotiations between political actors to facilitate the transition to a more stable and more democratic order*. In 1989, after years of lukewarm opposition to Communism, leaders of German Protestant churches were instrumental in brokering the negotiations that led to the fall of the Communist regime of the German Democratic Republic.

In identifying cases of pro-democratic religious activism, we restricted the analysis to the opening or early phases of democratization—i.e. the phases of authoritarian delegitimation and democratic inauguration. We focused on activities that contributed to the weakening of an authoritarian regime and the initial establishment of a democratic regime (where this occurred), not on activities that contributed to the more diffuse and less finite phase of democratic "consolidation." Also, whether a particular country witnessed any of these forms of pro-democratic religious activism depended on documentation by reliable, third-party observers – such as scholars, political analysts, and human rights-observers – and never on the claims of religious actors alone. This assessment is thus limited by the availability of such documentation in a form and language accessible to us. It is entirely possible, if not probable, that some pro-democratic religious activism in some countries – particularly countries in which field work is more difficult or scholarly interest is limited – did not appear in this case universe - because it

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[14] Jeffrey Klaiber, *The Church, Dictatorship, and Democracy in Latin America* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 55.

was undocumented, documented in a form or language inaccessible to us, or we were unable to find the relevant and available documentation. One implication of this is that, in all likelihood, *we understate rather than overstate the role of religious actors in global democratization* between 1972 and 2009.

Applying the above criteria and methodology yields the results in Table 2. In about 62 percent of the world's cases of democratic progress, at least some religious actors actively aligned themselves with democratization. Furthermore, as Table 2 indicates, the pro-democratic activity of religious actors was as pervasive as it was massive. More than half of the democratizing countries in each major region of the world saw religious actors play a pro-democratic role. In the Americas, religious actors played a pro-democratic role in 11 out of 15, or 73 percent of cases of democratizing countries. In Asia, the numbers were 10 out of 15, or 67 percent, of cases. Pro-democracy monks and mullahs, priests and patriarchs, were active everywhere—North and South, East and West, developed world and developing world.

If the sheer quantity of pro-democracy religious activism was impressive, so too was its quality. Table 3 arrays religious actors who played a democratizing role into two groups, those who played a "leading" role and those who played a "supporting" role. In politics, as in theater, discerning whether actors should be classified as "leading" or "supporting" is not always easy. But one good indicator is the timing of their appearance in the drama – did they make their entrance early, or did they stay offstage until late in the story? Leading actors tend to appear early and not wait behind the scenes until later. Another indicator is their relationship to the central action of the story—did they help initiate or shape some of its defining dynamic, or were they mostly its passive receptors, foils, or victims? Leading actors shape the flow and outcome of the action. A final indicator is sheer volume —how often and how much did we hear from them?

Leading actors typically appear early, frequently, and volubly. A supporting actor might do one of these things—appear early in the drama *or* help shape the defining action of the story *or* mount a constant and voluble dramatic presence. But it is characteristic of a leading actor to do all of the above: to appear early, often, *and* with dramatic consequence.

Table 3: Type of Democratizing Role Religious Actors
Played in Global Cases of Democratic Progress, 1972-2009

	WORLD	AFRICA	AMERICAS	ASIA	EUROPE
Total Democratizing Countries	78	24	15	15	24
Number of Democratizing Countries where Religious Actors Played a LEADING Democratizing Role	**30**	**9**	**7**	**8**	**6**
Number of Democratizing Countries where Religious Actors Played a SUPPORTING Democratizing Role	18	4	4	2	8
Democratized Countries where Religious Actors Played a Democratizing Role (by region)		Benin (L)* Burundi (S) Congo-B** (S) Ghana (L) Kenya (L) Liberia (L) Malawi (L) Mali (S) Mozambique (L) Namibia (L) Nigeria (S) South Africa (L) Zambia (L)	Bolivia (S) Brazil (L) Chile (L) El Salvador (L) Haiti (L) Guatemala (L) Mexico (S) Nicaragua (L) Paraguay (S) Peru (S) Uruguay (L)	East Timor (L) India (L) Indonesia (L) Iraq (L) Kuwait (L) Pakistan (S) Philippines (L) South Korea (L) Taiwan (S) Turkey (L)	Bosnia-Herzegovina (S) Croatia (L) Czech Republic (S) East Germany (S) Kosovo (S) Lithuania (L) Poland (L) Portugal (S) Romania (L) Serbia (L) Slovakia (S) Slovenia (S) Spain (L) Ukraine (S)

* (L) or (S) after the name of each country indicates whether the democratizing religious actor(s) in that country played a leading (L) or supporting (S) pro-democratic role.

**Congo-B is the Republic of the Congo, also sometimes known as Congo-Brazzaville (for its capital city, Brazzaville), and is to be distinguished from the Democratic Republic of the Congo or Congo-Kinshasa (for its capital city, Kinshasa).

As Table 3 illustrates, no part of the world failed to see numerous religious actors playing just this kind of leading role on behalf of democratic change. In fact, these leading pro-

democratic religious actors were actively involved in nearly 40 percent of all global cases of democratic progress from 1972 through 2009 (30 of 78). In Asia, religious actors played a leading pro-democratic role in more than half of all cases of democratic progress: 8 of 15. There, Muslim leaders like Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani in Iraq and the late Abdurrahman Wahid in Indonesia were prominent opponents of religious radicalism and narrow sectarianism: each pressed for forms of Islam supportive of democracy and religious reconciliation. In Africa, the Catholic and Presbyterian churches played a decisive role in galvanizing opposition to the authoritarian rule of Hastings Banda in Malawi, and the Anglican Church was a leading source of opposition to apartheid in South Africa as well as the authoritarian regime of Danial arap Moi in Kenya. Throughout Latin America, the Catholic Church was a prominent and influential supporter of democratic progress, playing a leading role in Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and even in relatively secular Uruguay. In Europe, Catholic and Protestant leaders and groups undermined numerous Communist regimes with the encouragement and often direct intervention of Pope John Paul II, while Orthodox Churches and leaders such as Archbishop Pavle, Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church, worked in the post-Communist period to oppose antidemocratic nationalist regimes, such as that of Slobodan Milosevic.

In all these cases, religious actors played an important role in the entire drama of democratic progress. They often fired the first decisive shot at an authoritarian government, as did the Catholic Church in Malawi, with its Lenten Pastoral Letter of March 1992, the first public criticism of Banda's increasingly brutal dictatorship. During the middle and frequently long and uncertain phase of democratization these religious actors were often instrumental in sustaining and organizing democratic opposition movements and maintaining pressure on

authoritarian or quasi-authoritarian regimes, as was true of a succession of Islamist parties in Turkey from the 1970s up through today. And these religious actors often played a crucial role in the final stage of democratization, as did the Catholic Church in Mozambique, mediating between the pro-democratic opposition and authoritarian loyalists and helping to secure a stable democratic settlement.

It is clear that where democratic progress occurred between 1972 and 2009, it found a friend in religion in an impressively large number of cases. Yet this finding raises a number questions. If religious actors were on the side of freedom in 48 of the world's 78 cases of democratization since 1972, what about the remaining 30 cases? Why did religious actors in those other cases fail to rally to the cause of freedom in a clear, deliberate, and sustained way? Among religious actors, what separates democratizers from non-democratizers? And what about the 47 countries categorized as "Not Free" by Freedom House—almost a quarter of the world's 200 or so states—that have failed to make substantial democratic gains? Does *their* lack of substantial democratic progress have anything to do with religious actors? Are anti-democratic religious actors partly responsible for helping to keep the "Not Free World" unfree?

By looking more closely at which actors have been most (and least) supportive, we advance towards an answer to these questions as well as our question of what shapes religious actors' approach to democratization.

Which Religious Actors Have Supported Democratic Progress?

We have already observed that pro-democratic religious actors were dispersed across the world's major geographic regions. Another way to characterize them is in terms of their basic religious identity and tradition. Some have suggested that Protestantism in particular or Western

Christianity in general serves as a special or even unique incubator of democracy.[15]

Protestantism was indeed an important shaper of modern democracy when it appeared in Europe

and America during the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries. Is this indeed the case in the

period under scrutiny? Consider the data in Table 4.

[15] Woodberry, Robert Dudley, and Timothy S. Shah. 2004. "The Pioneering Protestants". *Journal of Democracy*. 15 (2): 47-61.

**Table 4: Types of Religious Actors that Played a Pro-democratic Role
in Global Cases of Democratic Progress, 1972–2009**

TYPE OF RELIGIOUS ACTOR	In the World	In Africa	In the Americas	In Asia	In Europe
Buddhist	**0**	0	0	0	0
Catholic	**36** *(22 L / 14 S)* **	Benin (L)* Burundi (S) Congo-B (S) Ghana (L) Kenya (L) Liberia (L) Malawi (L) Mozambique (L) Namibia (S) Nigeria (S) South Africa (L) Zambia (L)	Bolivia (S) Brazil (L) Chile (L) El Salvador (L) Guatemala (L) Haiti (L) Mexico (S) Nicaragua (L) Paraguay (S) Peru (S) Uruguay (L)	East Timor (L) Philippines (L) South Korea (L)	Croatia (L) Czech Republic (S) Kosovo (S) Lithuania (L) Poland (L) Portugal (S) Slovakia (S) Slovenia (S) Spain (L) Ukraine (S)
Hindu	**1** *(1 L)*	0	0	India (L)	0
Muslim	**12** *(5 L / 7 S)*	Kenya (S) Mali (S) Nigeria (S)***	0	India (L) Indonesia (L) Iraq (L) Kuwait (L) Pakistan (S) Turkey (L)	Bosnia-Herzegovina (S) Kosovo (S) Serbia (S)
Orthodox	**4** *(1 L / 3 S)*	0	0	0	Bosnia-Herzegovina (S) Kosovo (S) Serbia (L) Ukraine (S)
Protestant	**19** *(8 L / 11 S)*	Congo-B (S) Ghana (L) Kenya (L) Liberia (S) Malawi (L) Mozambique (S) Namibia (L) Nigeria (S) South Africa (L) Zambia (L)	Brazil (S) Chile (S) Nicaragua (S) Peru (S)	Philippines (S) South Korea (L) Taiwan (S)	East Germany (S) Romania (L)

* (L) or (S) after the name of each country indicates whether the democratizing religious actor(s) in that country played a leading (L) or supporting (S) democratizing role.

** Each parenthetical breakdown indicates the number of democratizing religious actors from each religious tradition that played a *leading* democratizing role versus a *supporting* democratizing role. For example, in the case of Catholic actors, 22 played a leading role and 14 a supporting role.

*** A country is listed more than once when more than one kind of religious actor played a democratizing role in that country. For example, because Catholic, Muslim, and Protestant actors played a democratizing role in Nigeria, Nigeria is listed under each of those three categories of democratizing religious actor.

Table 4 shows that among pro-democratic religious actors no single religion or religious tradition has enjoyed a monopoly on pro-democratic activism. In the past generation's wave of democratization, at least one pro-democratic actor has emerged from almost every one of the world's major religious traditions. For example, self-consciously Hindu actors in India were in the forefront of protesting and resisting Indira Gandhi's authoritarian "Emergency" suspension of democracy between 1975 and 1977.[16] Actors in the Orthodox Christian Church played a notable role in support of democracy in four European countries—in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia, and Ukraine. Muslim actors played important pro-democratic roles in Iraq and Indonesia. In total, we found Muslim actors played a leading or supporting democratizing role in some 12 countries in Africa, Asia, and Europe. Protestant actors played a democratizing role in every region of the world, actively promoting democracy in a total of 19 countries. Catholic actors played a pro-democratic role in an impressive 36 countries, particularly in Africa, the Americas, and Europe, but also in three countries in Asia.

The other basic fact that emerges from the religious distribution of pro-democratic activism, however, is that its relative distribution is far from even. Although almost every religious tradition has seen at least some pro-democratic activism, religious actors from the Catholic tradition accounted for an overwhelming proportion of religious activism in this period: at least one of the pro-democratic religious actors was Catholic in three quarters of the cases (36

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[16] Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

of 48). And, in 18 of 48 cases, the *only* religious actors that played leading or supporting

democratizing roles were Catholic actors. These data confirm political scientist Samuel

Huntington's claim that the Third Wave of democratization was largely a "Catholic Wave."[17]

To put the Catholic contribution in stark terms, if one were to subtract the contribution of

Catholic leaders and organizations, religious actors would have played a role in far fewer cases

of global democratic progress—about 30 of 78 countries. Absent an array of Catholic clerics, lay

activists, and groups, ranging from Pope John Paul II to archbishops such as Oscar Romero in El

Salvador and Michael Francis in Liberia to human rights groups such as the Vicariate of

Solidarity in Chile, efforts to advance democracy and human rights would have been far weaker,

particularly in Africa and the Americas. This is true in part because of the quality and level of

Catholic involvement. As Table 4 indicates, in 23 of the 36 countries where Catholic actors

played a democratizing role, the role they played was a leading one. Only within the category of

Catholic pro-democratic actors, in fact, did a majority play a leading pro-democratic role; among

actors from the Muslim, Protestant, and Orthodox traditions, the majority played a supporting

one.

Nevertheless a satisfactory explanation of why some religious actors have been pro-

democratic and others indifferent or hostile to democracy must reckon with the fact that actors

from a wide range of religious traditions—Catholic, Hindu, Muslim, Orthodox and Protestant—

have actively supported democratic progress. Any explanation would therefore have to go

beyond what is sometimes called "cultural essentialism," which espouses that some cultures and

religions—especially Protestant and Confucian ones—lay more solid foundations for economic

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[17] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*
(Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 76.

and political development than other cultures.[18] Whatever its merits, this view cannot explain why religious actors from traditions that have been termed "progress-resistant"—such as Islam and Orthodoxy—have acted as agents of democratic progress. It also cannot explain why some actors from more "progress-prone" religious traditions failed to promote democratic progress. For example, why did the Anglican Church fail to promote democracy in Uganda but served as a leading proponent of democratization in neighboring Kenya? Why did the Catholic Church fail to promote democracy in Argentina but undertook pro-democratic activity in neighboring Chile and Brazil?

The lopsided distribution of democratic religious actors is no doubt partly due to the uneven nature of global religious demography itself. The world's religious communities are uneven both in terms of their absolute populations and their global dispersions. The Roman Catholic Church, for instance, has about one billion global adherents— more than any world religion—and it has large communities in dozens of countries across the globe. Hinduism's adherents, by contrast, are concentrated overwhelmingly in India and Nepal, with much smaller communities in a handful of other countries. With this grossly uneven demographic distribution, it is not surprising that there is a grossly uneven democratizing distribution, with Catholic actors playing a role in many more cases of global democratization than Hindu actors.

But religious demography is not political destiny. Islam's global population is greater than Protestantism's – 1.5 billion versus about 800 million (as of 2010). And Islam's global dispersion is comparable, with large Muslim communities spread across Africa, Asia, and southeastern Europe. Yet Protestant actors were involved in more cases of democratic progress than Muslim actors. Conversely, religious actors played a leading role in some political

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[18] Lawrence E. Harrison, *The Central Liberal Truth: How Politics Can Change a Culture and Save It from Itself* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

transitions even in countries where they represented a relatively small proportion of the overall population. The Catholic Church in Liberia, led by Archbishop Michael Francis, relentlessly protested the authoritarian regimes of Samuel Doe and later Charles Taylor, and was indispensable in stimulating international awareness and action, even though the Catholic share of Liberia's population was only about 3 percent. Neither demography nor culture alone, then, provides a satisfying account of why some religious actors were pro-democratic and some were indifferent or hostile to democracy.

Are there any democracy-promoting religious actors that we have overlooked? One religious tradition absent from our analysis is Judaism. In fact, the world's only Jewish-majority state, Israel, did not become a democracy or make democratic progress during the period analyzed here (1972-2009) for the simple reason that Israel has been a liberal electoral democracy ever since its founding in 1948.[19] Furthermore, the overwhelming majority of the world's 14 million Jews who live outside Israel, about 9 million, live in countries (mostly in the United States and France) that have been stable, consolidated democracies throughout the period in question. Due to the nature of Jewish demography, in other words, there is little organized Jewish presence and few Jewish actors in those regions of the world—Africa, Asia, the Americas, and Eastern and Central Europe—that have democratized in recent years. Judaism has lacked the demographic and geographic opportunity (and motivation), in other words, to mount serious pro-democratic activism in politically volatile and dynamic parts of the world.

Another religious tradition conspicuously absent from Table 4 is Buddhism. The absence of Buddhist actors from the roster of recent pro-democratic activism is more difficult to explain than the absence of Judaism. Buddhism's absence is not due to its having a small global

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[19] Freedom House codings begin in 1977. Israel has been rank as "Free" over the entire period from 1977 on.

population highly concentrated in already democratized countries. Buddhism has a large global

population with a significant organized presence and numerous Buddhist actors in many

countries. Furthermore, some countries with large Buddhist populations made at least some

democratic progress between 1972 and 2009, particularly South Korea and Taiwan. How did

Buddhist actors relate to these cases of democratization? Close inspection suggests that Buddhist

actors failed to play leading or supporting roles in the political dynamics that generated

democratic progress in South Korea or Taiwan.[20] This is not to say that Buddhist organizations

are anti-democratic or contributed nothing to democratization in these cases. In Taiwan, for

instance, Buddhism contributed to the flowering of civil society following Taiwan's democratic

transition —and hence to its democratic consolidation—but did not notably propel the transition

itself. Even stronger, Buddhist actors elsewhere have fought vigorously for democracy, self-

determination, and human rights. In China, the Dalai Lama has taken a high profile in advocating

for greater political freedom and self-determination in Tibet. In Burma thousands of Theravada

Buddhist monks formed the vanguard of the "Saffron Revolution" in August and September

2007. But China and Burma are countries that have failed conspicuously to make substantial

democratic progress. Here, it is the stubbornly repressive nature of the regimes that best explains

why Buddhist advocates of democracy failed to achieve success.

Wider analysis reveals 22 cases of countries that have failed to see measurable

democratic progress but have nonetheless been witness to high levels of pro-democratic religious

activism. Table 5 presents these cases, many of which are well known, such as the Muslim

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[20] Joshua Young-gi Hong, "Evangelicals and the Democratization of South Korea Since 1987," in David H. Lumsdaine, ed., *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Asia*, Timothy Samuel Shah, ed., *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in the Global South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 185–233; Wi Jo Kang, *Christ and Caesar in Modern Korea: A History of Christianity and Politics* (Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 1997); Richard Madsen, *Democracy's Dharma: Religious Renaissance and Political Development in Taiwan* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2007).

Brotherhood's advocacy of greater political competition in Egypt or protests against political and religious repression by unregistered Protestant and Catholic Churches in China. Not so well known are other cases, such as the organized resistance of Hindu actors to ethno-religious authoritarianism in Muslim-majority Malaysia and Christian-majority Fiji.

Table 5: Religious Actors that Attempted a Pro-democratic Role in Countries that Experienced no Measurable Democratic progress, 1972–2009

NUMBER OF DEMOCRATIZED COUNTRIES WHERE RELIGIOUS ACTORS PLAYED A DEMOCRATIZING ROLE

TYPE OF RELIGIOUS ACTOR	In the World	In Africa	In the Americas	In Asia	In Europe
Buddhist	3	0	0	Burma China / Tibet Vietnam*	0
Catholic	11	Angola* Congo-Kinshasa* Madagascar* Zimbabwe	Colombia Cuba* Honduras* Venezuela	China Malaysia Vietnam*	0
Hindu	2	0	0	Fiji Malaysia	0
Muslim	11	Algeria* Cote d'Ivoire* Egypt* Tunisia	0	China / Xinjiang Iran Jordan* Malaysia Syria* Tajikistan Uzbekistan	0
Orthodox	1	Egypt*	0	0	0
Protestant	4	Madagascar* Zimbabwe	0	China Vietnam*	0
Total	22	8	4	10	0

*Indicates countries that failed to make substantial democratic progress as defined in the text of this chapter but nonetheless made *some* measurable democratic progress between 1972 and 2009 – i.e. an improvement in their combined Freedom House Political Rights and Civil Liberties scores of at least one point. Countries not so designated saw either no change or deterioration in their Freedom House scores.

Here again we see a wide range of pro-democratic religious actors—across all geographic regions and, in this case, all major religious traditions (except Judaism, for the reasons elaborated earlier). Among these 22 countries, in fact, we see a somewhat less lopsided concentration of

religious actors than we saw with the 48 countries where pro-democratic religious actors were involved in democratization.

A full profile of religious actors and democratization must finally consider anti-democratic religious actors that directly opposed democracy and democratization. Table 6 lists these cases.

Table 6: Non-democratic Countries in which Religious Actors Played An Anti-democratic Role, 1972–2009

UNDEMOCRATIC COUNTRY	TYPE OF RELIGIOUS ACTOR COUNTERING DEMOCRACY
1. Afghanistan	Muslim
2. Algeria	Muslim
3. Fiji	Protestant
4. Iran	Muslim
5. Lebanon	Muslim & Catholic (Maronite)
6. Malaysia	Muslim
7. Saudi Arabia	Muslim
8. Sri Lanka	Buddhist
9. Sudan	Muslim
10. Russia	Orthodox

Since 1972 there have been 10 countries in which religious actors have actively undermined progress toward democratization. These include, first, those undemocratic countries in which major religious actors have helped to keep the forces of democratization at bay. As of this writing in mid-2010, for example, Iran's clerical regime continues to organize the trials and executions of pro-democratic activists on the grounds that they are guilty of *moharebeh*, or

waging war against God. Iran is not alone. In nine other countries religious actors actively

obstructed democratic progress and helped to strengthen authoritarian regimes, trends, or

movements. In some cases they succeeded, while in others democracy progressed despite their

efforts.

Towards an Explanation

This empirical mapping shows both diversity and pattern. Although religious actors adopt

varying postures towards democratization, most have been directed at positively influencing the

progress of democracy. And although each global region and each global religion contains a

variety of postures, active democratizers have emerged from some religions more so than from

others. This empirical survey leads us to our second question: what explains why religious actors

support or fail to support democratization?

Based on our comparative analysis of the above cases, including cases of pro-democratic

and anti-democratic religious activism, we argue that two factors matter most: 1) the institutional

independence between religion and state; and 2) political theology. Institutional independence is

the degree of mutual autonomy between religious actors and the state, including the extent to

which each entity has authority over the other in terms of its ability to hold office, choose its

representatives, and set policy. Essentially, it is the ability of each to govern its own affairs.[21]

Institutional independence ranges from being high, where religion and state are independent, to

low, where their relationship may be called "integrated." At any level, independence can also

vary in kind, taking either a "consensual" form, where both religious and state are content with

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[21] Daniel Philpott, "Explaining the Political Ambivalence of Religion," *American Political Science Review* 103, no. 3 (August, 2007), 506-507. In this piece, institutional independence is specified as differentiation, a term from sociology. We see the two terms as synonymous. We elaborate upon institutional independence and political theology in Duffy Toft, Philpott and Samuel Shah, *God's Century: Resurgent Religion in Global Politics*, Chapter Two.

their authority, or a "conflictual" form, where at least one party desires to revise the status quo. "Consensual independence" is broadly the condition of liberal democracy, where religion and state are stably separated. For those religious actors who favor democratization, this is victory.

But what sort of independence from the state characterizes those religious actors who efficaciously advocate democracy where democracy does not yet exist? Those religious actors that support democratization live largely in a condition of "conflictual independence." This indicates two things: (1) they live under an authoritarian regime that strives to deny them their freedom; but (2) they have fought back against this regime successfully enough to retain significant independence to conduct their own affairs – worship, education, control of their leadership. Their condition is one that commentator George Weigel has called "moral extraterritoriality"—a protected island of free activity in a sea of harsh control.[22] From this beleaguered space, with this embattled autonomy, they are able to conduct the activities of resistance. Both the Catholic Church in Poland during Communist rule between the late 1940s and 1989 and major Muslim movements under the dictatorship of Suharto in Indonesia from 1967 to 1998 are examples of religious actors that were both conflictually independent as well as potent forces that helped end authoritarian regimes.

By contrast, religious actors that are "conflictually integrated" are those who live under an authoritarian regime that has suppressed them so brutally and effectively that they are hardly independent at all and thus unable to mount any serious democratizing resistance. The Russian, Bulgarian, and Romanian Orthodox churches under Communist regimes during the Cold War are examples. Different still are religious actors that are "consensually integrated" with their state, meaning that they enjoy a privileged relationship that gives them little incentive to resist and

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[22] George Weigel, *The Final Revolution: The Resistance Church and the Collapse of Communism* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1992), 151.

little distance from the regime with which to resist. Shiite Ayatollahs in Iran and the Buddhist *sangha* in Sri Lanka are examples of this type of relationship.

Conflictual independence, then, is the condition that enables religious actors to strive for the democracy they desire but do not yet enjoy. What motivates religious actors in these circumstances to strive for democracy? It is their political theology, or the set of doctrines that they hold regarding political authority, justice, and the proper relationship between religion and state. Religious actors who undertake advocacy of democratization are motivated by beliefs, rooted in their theology, in the legitimacy of liberal democracy as a form of political system. These beliefs motivate their behavior. Most religious actors that favor democracy have come to do so relatively late in the history of their tradition. Although some founding religious texts contain ideas favorable to democracy, it is in particular historical circumstances that religious actors' doctrines of democracy develop—for example, colonial America in the case of some Protestant churches; the global political environment after the Second World War in the case of Catholicism; and in the in the case of certain Turkish Islamic movements, the growth of a middle class in Turkey in the late twentieth century. These historical circumstances are diverse and difficult to generalize about. In some cases political theology is itself shaped by regimes and their policies towards religion. Under some authoritarian regimes, for instance, religious actors are so suppressed that they change their political theology to conform. This might be said, for instance, of the Russian Orthodox Church after its initial resisters were martyred in the 1920s. Generally, though, we believe that political theology is not reducible to or simply the product of the degree and kind of institutional independence between religion and state. It exercises its own influence.

Our argument, then, is that religious actors are more likely to be pro-democratic when they enjoy institutional independence from the state, albeit a conflictual, contested independence, and when they carry a democratic political theology. Where religious actors lack either or both of these qualities—one a matter of institutions and the other of ideas — they are unlikely to promote democratization processes.

The Catholic Wave

Above we noted the Catholic Church has taken a strong, activist role in democratization over the past two generations. From a historical perspective, this is a striking finding. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the Catholic Church was stridently at odds with Europe's democracies. How, then, did the Catholic Church come to be the motor of global democratic change?

A momentous shift in political theology propelled the Catholic Wave. This shift took place in the Second Vatican Council in Rome, where, from 1962 to 1965, the Church's bishops gathered from all over the globe to discuss the Church's relationship to the modern world. One of the achievements of the Council was to proclaim human rights, peace, and economic development with an authority, force, and philosophical and theological foundation that the Church had not heretofore given to these concepts. Most strikingly, the Church came to endorse religious freedom—the right of people to choose and to practice their own religious faith—as a human right. Why had the Church not proclaimed such a right earlier? Two reasons stand out. First, nascent European democracies put forth a model of religious freedom that involved suppressing the Catholic Church. Their influence was the French Revolution, which proclaimed individual rights but sought to kill off the organizational structure of the Church, which it associated with a corrupt aristocracy and monarchy. Practicing such conflictual integration,

European democracy was illiberal. Second, the Catholic Church itself maintained a medieval political theology that held that ideally the Church was to be established as the official one for a realm and that members of other religions had no absolute right to practice their faith. By 1965, though, several factors brought the Church to embrace religious freedom explicitly: its experience of flourishing in the United States, whose constitution guarantees religious freedom; a new friendliness to the Church in western European democracies after World War II; the rise of regimes, especially Communist ones, which sharply repressed the Church; and the development of philosophical and theological foundations for religious freedom among Catholic philosophers.

Enabled by the unusually tight authority structure of a global network of bishops united around the Pope, the new political theology spread to national Catholic churches around the world. The seed of the new political theology, however, did not fall onto fertile soil everywhere. Some national churches came to promote democracy with great vigor while others remained resistant. The promoters were those who both embraced the new political theology most thoroughly (and in a few cases had already embraced it prior to the Council) and enjoyed or managed to establish independence from their state institutions.

Four broad patterns bear out these influences. The first consists of national Catholic churches that had already established conflictual independence from state institutions prior to the Council. Of these, it was the churches in which liberal democratic thought became most deeply and widely lodged among both clerics and laypeople that came to oppose dictatorships most assertively. The model here is Poland, which had a long history of defending its institutional independence against Prussian, Russian, and Austro-Hungarian monarchs during Poland's occupation between 1795 and 1918 and then under Communism after the Second World War. After Vatican II the Polish Church came to advocate explicitly for human rights and democracy,

especially after one of its native bishops became Pope. A similar pattern—first independence, then adoption of liberal democratic political theology, then opposition to dictatorship—can be found in Catholic Churches in Lithuania, Ukraine, and South Korea. It can also be found in several Latin American countries, almost all of whose Catholic churches had become disestablished, and thus independent, by 1925. When dictatorships swept over the continent in the 1960s and 1970s, it was here again those national churches in which democratic ideas had spread widest that came to demand democracy strongest: Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Peru.

A second pattern consists of national Catholic churches which, at the time of the Second Vatican Council, enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with dictators who supported these churches and benefitted from the spiritual legitimacy that these churches provided: consensual integration. But then, as a result of the Council's teachings, the bishops of these churches withdrew from these relationships and took up opposition: conflictual independence. In these cases, changes in political theology preceded and brought about changes in the relationship between religion and state. Fitting this pattern are the Spanish Catholic Church, which had enjoyed a tight relationship with Generalissimo Francisco Franco until the late 1960s, as well as Catholic churches in Portugal and the Philippines.

In a third pattern, a national Catholic Church's independence from its state and its liberal democratic political theology emerged at the same time and led to the Church's active agitation for democracy. This was a common pattern among African Catholic churches, including ones in Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

A final pattern reflects the fact that the Catholic Church's backing for democracy during the past generation has been far from universal. It consists of cases in which the local Church

authorities either failed to oppose or else actually supported authoritarian regimes. The Catholic Church in both the Czech Republic and Hungary, for instance, opposed communist dictatorships far less vigorously than did Catholic churches in Poland and Lithuania, while in Africa Catholic churches in Angola, Rwanda, and Uganda were weak forces for freedom in comparison to their counterparts elsewhere. The Catholic Church in Paraguay was feeble in its protest in comparison to those in Brazil and Chile, while the Argentine Catholic Church remained allied with the military dictatorship that carried out the Dirty Wars of 1976 and 1983. Each of these churches failed to establish independence from its regime and had absorbed democratic political theology far less than other Catholic Churches that lived in the same neighborhood but were far more aggressive in standing up to the local state autocrat.

The Eastern Orthodox Church

Eastern Orthodox churches contributed hardly at all to the fall of a junta in Greece in 1974, to the collapse of Communist regimes in Romania and Bulgaria in 1989, or to democratization in Ukraine or Russia when communism fell there in 1991. True, in the late 1990s and 2000s, Orthodox churches contributed positively to democracy in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia, and the Orange Revolution of Ukraine, but in all of these cases, except for Serbia, they were supporting rather than lead actors.

What explains the weakness of Orthodox churches as democratizers in comparison to the broad pattern of support for democracy in the post-Vatican II Catholic Church? Ever since the Great Schism of 1054 separated the eastern Orthodox churches from Latin Christendom and the authority of the Pope, Orthodox churches have practiced an acquiescent "symphonic" relationship with political authority, whether this authority takes the form of the medieval Byzantine Emperor, Muslim rulers in the Ottoman Empire following the fall of Constantinople in

1453, nineteenth century monarchs, or twentieth century Communist dictators. Divided along national lines since the nineteenth century, Orthodox churches have lacked the transnational authority structure and global reach of the Catholic Church. Comparatively and historically, Orthodox churches have been institutionally integrated with states and empires. As for political theology, until recently most Orthodox churches have not held a strong doctrine of political authority or of the relationship between temporal and spiritual authority. Unlike the western churches, the Orthodox Church never developed a strong notion of two swords or of a differentiation between spiritual and temporal functions. Nor did they experience the embrace of democratic political theology that the Second Vatican Council brought about. It was not until the 1990s that democratic thinking made its way into a few Orthodox churches, especially those of the former Yugoslavia, which then came to make a modest contribution to democracy.

Protestantism

Protestant churches preceded the Catholic Church by some three hundred years in developing political theologies that favored features of democracy like religious freedom and the independence of church and state. But not all of them. Even at that time it was the small churches of the "radical reformation" that favored religious liberty and the separation of political and religious authority in England, the Netherlands, and America, in contrast to Lutheran and Anglican churches that held a doctrine of "Erastianism" that favored the state's role as a protector and even a partial governor of the church.

Today's Protestant churches remain diverse in their political theology, in their relationship to their respective states, and in their size and internal structure. They range from large transnational "mainline" churches, including Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches, to thousands of independent churches, many of them Pentecostal, that

meet in storefronts and ramshackle buildings in cities and villages throughout Latin America, Africa, and East Asia. They vary, too, in their support for democracy. Lutheran churches in East Germany, Latvia, and Estonia, having incorporated Erastian enmeshment with the state into both their thought and their practice, contributed very little to the downfall of Communism in their countries. The German church leaders mentioned above who helped to broker the departure of Communism played an active role only in Communism's final months. Exceptional were grassroots members of the East German church, who held a very different theology and practiced a very different institutional relationship with the state. These were dissidents, who espoused human rights and either kept a distance from or actively opposed the regime. As our argument predicts, they were integral in organizing protest rallies in fall 1989. Elsewhere in the world, it is those Protestant churches that have maintained the heritage of that strand of the Reformation that stressed independence from the state and doctrines of individual freedom and self-governance that have proven the most powerful democratizers. The churches in the South African Council of Churches, which opposed the apartheid state, the Kenyan Anglican Church, and the Taiwanese Presbyterian Church are among those that fit the description.[23] By contrast, the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa and Protestant churches in Guatemala and Rwanda remained consensually integrated with their respective states and scantly supported democracy.[24] A final category of Protestant churches are ones that may have been independent from their authoritarian state but whose theology of personal salvation shunned political action, as was true of some Pentecostals in Brazil, Chile, Kenya, and South Korea.

Islam

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[23] Also among these are the Malawian Presbyterian Church, the Mozambican Anglican Church, the Ghanaian Presbyterian Church, Protestant churches in Zambia, the National Council of Churches in South Korea, and evangelical churches in Peru and Nicaragua.

[24] These also include Protestant churches in Uganda, Cameroon, and Liberia.

Since September 11, 2001, no religion's compatibility with democracy has been more disputed than that of Islam. Skeptics find obstacles to democracy in Islam's lack of an intellectual basis for constitutionalism, human rights, and democracy; its proneness to fundamentalism; its stress on revelation over popular opinion and legislative deliberation; its treatment of women; and its economic and political lack of development. Defenders rejoin that Islam includes a multiplicity of voices, sources of law, and schools of political thought; a historical tradition of respecting minorities, especially Jews and Christians, who are considered "people of the book"; and concepts that favor democracy including *shurah* (consultation), *ijma* (consensus), and *ijtihad* (independent interpretive judgment). Our inquiry here, though, is not into Islamic thought but into Islam politics as it is practiced and voiced. What does the record show?

A bird's eye view suggests a dearth of democracy. Muslims make up a majority of the population in 47 countries. Only three of these, Indonesia, Mali, and Senegalare ranked fully "Free" by Freedom House. Even Indonesia's status must be qualified by its place on the high end of countries that restrict religious freedom and witness social hostilities towards religious minorities, as a recent report by the Pew Forum shows.[25] In a statistical analysis of global Islam, political scientist Steven Fish demonstrates a strong relationship between Islam and authoritarianism, one that holds even when other shapers of democracy like economic development and ethnic uniformity are thrown into the equation.[26] The pattern is even starker in the Arab portion of the Islamic world —the Middle East, mostly—which altogether lacks an electoral democracy or "Free" country.[27] Nor has Islam played a strong role in the global democratization of the past generation. Between 1981 and 2001, not a single Muslim country jumped into the group of "Free" countries, while two Muslim countries departed from the "Partly

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[25] "Global Restrictions on Religion," Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, December 2009, 3.
[26] M. Steven Fish, "Islam and Authoritarianism," *World Politics* 55, no. 1 (October, 2002), 4-37.
[27] See Stepan and Robertson, "Arab, Not Muslim, Exceptionalism," 32.

Free" group and ten moved into the "Not Free" cluster.[28] As our data above show, Muslim actors

played a pro-democratic role in only 12 countries where some democratic progress occurred (as

distinguished from a full democratic transition to "Free" status)— this in a religion that includes

1.5 billion adherents or roughly a quarter of the world's population.

Authoritarianism, however, is far from the whole story of Islam. Although only three

Muslim majority states are clearly democratic, about a quarter of them are electoral democracies,

meaning that even if they fail to guarantee important human rights, they hold genuinely

contested elections. Indeed, if the focus is electoral democracies, there is evidence that things

have improved. Between the early 1990s and 2005, political scientist Vali Nasr has shown that a

"rise of Muslim democracy" has occurred in countries like Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia,

Pakistan, and Turkey, where parties with Islamic identities have come to contest elections and,

even more crucially, stand for election a second time rather than hold on to power.[29] Democratic

Islamic movements have also shown up in states like Jordan and Egypt. Judging by population

rather than countries, roughly half of the world's Muslims now live under democratic

constitutions. Indonesia, the country with the world's largest Muslim population, is a democracy.

And, if we add to our 11 Muslim democratizers mentioned above, 11 other Muslim actors who

promoted democracy in cases where democratization did not succeed, the picture looks better

still.

Islam contains a deficit of democracy but far from a complete dearth. An analysis of the

47 Muslim majority countries shows that behind the deficit is the wide prevalence within Islam

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[28] Adrian Karatnycky, "Muslim Countries and the Democracy Gap," *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 1 (January, 2002), 101-104.

[29] Vali Nasr, "Rise of 'Muslim Democracy'," *Journal of Democracy* 16, no. 2 (2005), 14. Open electoral competitions, he documents, have occurred in in 1991, 1996, and 2001, in Indonesia in 1999 and 2004, in Malaysia in 1995, 1999, and 2004, in Pakistan in 1990, 1993, and 1997, and in Turkey in 1995, 1999, and 2002.

of integrated institutions and of a political theology that advocates such institutions. Political scientist Jonathan Fox indeed finds that the level of "government involvement in religion"—something much like integration, or low levels of institutional independence—in Islam is at least twice that of all other world religions.[30]

But if authoritarianism and integration are common among Muslim-majority states, Islam is not always the reason for the authoritarianism or the integration. Two broad patterns of integrated institutions can be found in Islam. Regimes that make up the first pattern are in fact hardly religious, but highly secular. Governance is based on western-inspired ideals of nationalism, economic growth, the modernization of traditional forms of family life and gender relations, in some cases socialism, and, not least, a secularism that sharply restricts religious authority. What this pattern illustrates is that secular regimes carry their own political theologies. Here the political theology is one that advocates the privatization and political marginalization of religious actors. On the basis of this political theology, such regimes typically form an alliance with a moderate faction of Islam that it designates as official, providing it with legal and economic support even while keeping a close eye on its activities (consensual integration), while simultaneously marginalizing and suppressing conservative and radical Islamic movements (conflictual integration). This pattern in fact includes the vast majority of Islamic authoritarian governments in the twentieth century. The prototype for it is the Republic of Turkey, founded in 1923 by Kemal Atatürk upon these very ideals. It includes a number of Muslim states that emerged from colonial independence after World War II, including Egypt, Syria, Morocco, Libya, Iran under the Shah, Iraq under Saddam Hussein, Indonesia under Suharto, Yemen, Kuwait, Jordan, Algeria, and Tunisia. It also includes several of the Central Asian republics that

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[30] Jonathan Fox, "World Separation of Religion and State into the 21st Century," *Comparative Political Studies* 39 (2006), 537-569.

won independence when the Soviet Union fell in 1991. Authoritarianism in Islam is as much the result of the French Revolution as it is of the Iranian Revolution.

The Iranian Revolution, however, is indeed the standard bearer for a second pattern of authoritarianism in Islam. This one consists of regimes that are based on a political theology of Radical Islamic Revivalism, which promotes a strong and traditional form of *sharia*, or Islamic law. Such a political theology typically calls for a strong role for approved religious leaders in public affairs, religious restrictions on what laws can be passed, and sharp regulation of worship, education, family, and dress according to religious doctrine. Once in power, Islamic Revivalists fashion integrated regimes that both promote and regulate their preferred interpretation of faith while suppressing dissenting views and religious minorities. Here, political theology shapes the institutional relationship between religion and state. Outside Iran, such regimes have reigned in Sudan (1983-present), in Afghanistan under the Taliban (1996-2001), in 12 out of 36 states in contemporary Nigeria (1999-present), and in Saudi Arabia, where Radical Revivalists are closely allied with the monarchy.

Still another pattern consists of those democratic regimes and movements that do exist in Islam. Both Mali and Senegal rank highly among Islamic countries for their levels of democracy. Both countries' overwhelmingly Islamic populations are broadly content with democratic institutions that provide religious freedom. Senegal's democratic regime is undergirded by the county's predominant Sufi population, which is well organized and holds a political theology that recommends toleration towards non-Sufis and endorses a significant separation between temporal and religious authority. Mali's Muslims are comparatively less centrally organized and more diverse and variegated in their support for democracy since multiparty elections were held in 1992. Still, some Islamic groups in Mali have held a centuries-long tradition of pluralistic

thinking and have supported democracy. In Indonesia, the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) movement, which carries a commitment to the separation of religious and political authority and a culture of religious pluralism that is at least six centuries old, became a crucial partner in the coalition of movements that brought down the dictatorship of Suharto and encouraged multiparty elections in 1999. Most dramatic, though, is the Islamic movement in Turkey, which arose to challenge the very prototype of an Islamic secular authoritarian regime. There, the Islamic Justice and Development Party became the dominant coalition partner in the Turkish government in 2002 after decades of being suppressed by the military arm of the secular Kemalist regime, with which it had a conflictually independent relationship. The party's political theology springs from the Nurcu and Nakşibendi movements, which fused Sufi spirituality with democratic ideals. Its governance has brought greater democratic competition to Turkey, though the country is still wanting in certain dimensions of democracy like freedom for minority religious groups as well as for majority religious institutions, such as mosques, which are tightly controlled by Turkey's Ministry of Religious Affairs.

Hinduism

In India, Hinduism of the sort championed by Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress Party helped to found a democracy based on religious freedom in 1947 and later resisted the emergency rule of Indira Gandhi in the mid-1970s. In recent decades, though, a far more integrationist brand of Hinduism has sought to curtail India's otherwise consensually independent institutions. This political theology holds that India is a Hindu nation and that state ought to promote India's Hindu identity both through laws and through symbolic politics. After the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party gained the prime ministership in 1998 and control of several state governments around the same time, it sponsored laws designed to advance Hindu culture and to

41

restrict conversions to Christianity and Islam, and even sanctioned pogroms in the state of Gujarat. Political theology here worked to make institutions less democratic. In Nepal, which is 96 percent Hindu, organized religious movements played little role in the country's recent transition from a kingdom to a democratic republic. In fact, Hindus protested the declaration of Nepal as a secular republic in which Hinduism would no longer be the official religion.

Buddhism

Buddhist religious actors in the world today practice both independent and integrated relationships with their governments. Consensual integration can be found In Sri Lanka and Thailand in which the *sangha*, or community of monks, offers its support and advice to the government, which in turn supports the *sangha* legally and financially. The governments of Burma, Laos and Vietnam, by contrast, practice a conflictual integration involving tight control over the governance and doings of the *sangha*. The political theology of the *sangha* in integrated settings is either one of passivity towards politics or else one of religious nationalism much like Hinduism in India. Over the past fifty years, a different form of political theology, "Engaged Buddhism," has developed that fuses ancient Buddhist concepts of peace and toleration with modern Western ideas such as human rights, democracy, nonviolence, and environmentalism. Movements built on these ideas have striven to influence the policies of governments in Burma, Cambodia, China (regarding Tibet), Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Taiwan, and Thailand, sometimes encountering fierce opposition. Like other religions, Buddhism hosts a diversity of political theologies and relationships with political authorities.

Conclusion

To answer the questions that we posed at the beginning of this article, religious actors formed a crucial part of the drama of global democratization during the past generation—sometimes as lead actors, sometimes as supporting actors, and sometimes as reactionary resisters. Religious democratizers have been found most numerously in the Catholic Wave but also come from every major religion on the planet. Every religious tradition also contains actors who have been passive, impotent, or resistant to democratization. Overall, however, the preponderant disposition of religious actors in relation to democratization has been one of supportive engagement. Although religious actors have resisted democratization in 39 countries, they have promoted it in some 70 countries (48 of which underwent democratization, 22 of which failed to do so).

What distinguishes these different types of political activism is the presence of a liberal democratic political theology and of a conflictually independent relationship with authoritarian regimes. These traits characterized the Catholic Church in Poland, the Islamic movement in Indonesia, and the protesters at the Nikolaikirche in Leipzig, but not the Catholic Church in Argentina, the Ayatollahs in Iran, or the Orthodox Church in Cold War Bulgaria, to cite a few examples. To be sure, these two traits are not the only ones that shape democratic activity. The size of the religious actor, its internal organizational structure, the religiosity of its members, and other influences matter as well. Nevertheless we hold that these two factors explain a great deal of the variation in whether and how religious actors participate in this process and will continue to do so in the coming decades as democracy expands across the globe.

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