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Editors' Note

This issue opens with Jonathan Fox asking "Is it Really God's Century?" in which he evaluates religious support and discrimination from 1990–2008 using data from his Religion and State Round 2 (RAS2). Fox begins by offering a solid dissection of the secularism debate. The remainder of the work employs the RAS2 data to examine "government support for religion — which includes financial support, the enforcement of religious precepts, and the intertwining of religious and government institutions — and government policies which limit the religious practices or institutions of minority religions." The outcome indicates that both religious discrimination and support have increased significantly between 1990 and 2008. Fox demonstrates that "until some point between the early 1960s and late 1970s … secularism was gaining ground. Since this indeterminate point in time, religion has been coming back." His findings confirm that secularism is not an inevitable process but should be seen as religion's competitor. Fox's work sets an interesting context for this issue where many of the articles consider the relationship between secularism, religion, and the state apparatus.

In "State Secularization and Religious Resurgence" Birol Baskan compares the different institutionalization of state-religion relations in Turkey and Iran and argues that the different historical trajectories of each country set the agenda for either secularization or religious resurgence. He notes that "the Turkish religious community could not benefit from the turmoil of the 1970s, whereas the Iranian religious community benefited to the fullest extent and turned Iran into a theocracy." With Baskan's detailed historical analysis, we can see that, in the case of Turkey at least, the secular state enabled religious communities to have an investment in political order and helped state loyalty. While some believe Turkey's emergence as a secular state is an inspiring model, Baskan cautions against such comparisons. Instead, scholars should pay greater attention to historical trajectories, noting for example that Turkey did not experience the grassroots uprisings as seen in Egypt.

Next, Rachel Scott's article moves us directly to a discussion of the Muslim Brotherhood. Her general claim is that rather than constructing

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the Muslim Brotherhood as opposed to the secular, it is more useful to construct them as "conforming to the principle of secular power whereby the state manages, defines, and intervenes in religion." Focusing primarily on Article 2 of the Constitution, the role of the Supreme Constitutional Court, and public order, Scott argues that in opting for civil language rather than religious, the Muslim Brotherhood gives some linguistic priority to the secular state. She concludes that "future negotiations about what the boundaries of *sharīʿa* should be and how it relates to particular law and statutes, negotiations that will involve the managing of the religious and the civil, will only continue to reinforce the principle of secular power."

Daniel Stockemer and Susan Khazaeli consider "Electoral turnout in Muslim majority states" by constructing an impressive data set from Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, Adam Carr's election archive and the Inter Parliamentary Union data on national parliaments. They control for "compulsory voting, the electoral system type, the decisiveness of the election, the competitiveness of the election, the size of the country, the regime type and development." Their findings clearly indicate that "Muslim-majority countries have lower turnout rates than majority non-Muslim countries." Drawing attention to the distinctive ways in which some religious beliefs may reinforce civic engagement while others do not, they highlight three features of Islam that may hinder voter turnout: in some countries the Islamic religious institutions control political behavior, Islam has significant control over cultural norms directing individual behavior, and in many Muslim countries those who do not respect Islamic law may be punished. As a result, many Muslims may be "disinterested in participating in conventional forms of political actions and distrustful of officials, government authorities, or even of the state's electoral practices."

The theme of secularism continues in Frode Løvlie's comparison of Fatah and Hamas. In Palestinian politics, he argues, the religious versus secularism cleavage does not adequately describe the competition between these two factions. Instead, each has moved toward the center of the political spectrum in order to "maximize support." Echoing the work of sociologist Jamil Hilal, Løvlie maintains that "enmity between the two parties stems neither from ideological differences along a secular-religious axis, nor from strategic differences, but rather from a classic competition for influence, power, and position" and should be seen as a competition for the median voter.

Momentarily shifting away from a discussion regarding secularism, Bethany Blackstone, Tetsuya Matsubayashi, and Elizabeth Oldmixon

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focus on the diversity of attitudes held by Israelis about relationship between religion and the state. They make a good case for the importance of viewing domestic political competition through the lens of socio-cultural, group-based politics. They argue that in Israel, as in many other countries, domestic politics is shaped by a variety of socio-cultural groups with different understandings of religion as well as the relationship between religion and the state. Their meticulous study confirms the usefulness of "the distinction between ethotic and associational expressions of religion" in interpreting Israeli politics.

In "Church and EU Dialogue," Kenneth Houston targets the "institutionalization of dialogue" in Article 17 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. While the original intention seemed to be a desire to foster religious dialogue within the public square, the configuration of the parameters of that dialogue has "inhibited the communicative potential." Houston argues that mainstream religious institutions have "carved out a privileged interlocutor relationship with the EU's key decision-making institutions." Interestingly, he wonders if European secularization has served as a backdrop to making the "dialogue" more about survival than the sharing and exchange of ideas. For example, the current construction appears to limit the ability to challenge mainstream institutional religious articulations of values.

Finally, the work of Jungpeng Li takes us across the world on a similar question to investigate the role of the religion of the nonreligious and the politics of the apolitical. Over a particular period, and despite an attempt to be less 'religious' in nature, Falun Gong's trajectory became a conflict-amplifying process in which the interplay between the group as a religious actor and the state policies as an apparatus of religious control led to the eventual crackdown. The mobilizing capacity of the Faun Gong shocked the state into banning the group and purging its practitioners. Li's historical account of events, rounds off this issue by articulating the fluidity of the construction of both the religious/non-religious as well as the political/apolitical.

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