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Editors' Introduction

Reading back through the articles in this issue reminds us how much we have enjoyed our role as editors. The breadth of topics, the meticulous scholarship and the thorough and thoughtful analysis captured here offer an excellent cross section of the international flavor of our discipline. Most of the scholars in this issue employ case-study or comparative methodology which gives a wealth of detail while all the time reminding us to remain skeptical of generalizations.

Valery Dzutsati, David Siroky, and Khasan Dzutsev open this issue by focusing our attention on The Political Economy of Support for Sharia asking "under what conditions is Islam likely to serve as a platform for political, even liberal, reform?" The authors challenge assumptions that Islam leans toward communitarianism and away from liberalism. Their fascinating look at Russian North Caucasus demonstrates that when the over-arching political context does not accommodate political or economic change, Muslims may employ religious language and symbols to serve as a "political platform for politically and economically liberal forces."

Policy analysts will be interested in the consideration of US State-level Anti-Sharia Initiatives by Joshua Mitchell and Brendan Toner. Exploring the circumstances in which such initiatives are proposed by legislators and the causal pathways linking initiatives among states, they argue that these initiatives follow atypical diffusion patterns. For example, surrounding states are less likely to adopt similar policies if their neighbor had done so previously. The piece contributes to the ongoing discussion regarding the usefulness of the diffusion model when analyzing controversial morality policies.

Elina Schleutker turns our attention to the determinants of regulation of religion and argues that there are significant differences between autocratic countries and democratic countries. Previous literature, guided by theories of modernization or clash of civilization, suggests that the level of democracy increases when the separation between religion and state increases and when implemented religious regulation was strategically targeted toward potential anti-government movements. Using a comparative approach, Schleutker maintains that the influence of political environment

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on regulation is key and therefore autocratic and democratic countries should be considered distinctly.

Drawing on Bellah's notion of civil religion, Ryan O'Leary explains that idea of Americans as new "Chosen People," or "the new Israel fleeing religious bondage in Europe into a new Promised Land, with a divine mission to build a Godly community," can take on a nativist cast in certain traditionalist formulations. In times of political and economic uncertainty, threats are described in the rhetoric of nativist fears of non-assimilation and criminality. Working through the seemingly diverse rhetorics of the original culture warrior Pat Buchanan and of President Obama on immigration, O'Leary convincingly argues that such rhetoric "diminishes what is most valuable in American civil religion — its prophetic quality" and that it may also be self-defeating.

Matthew Walton and Michael Jerryson similarly draw our attention to cultural specificities in their case-study of Buddhist monks and the cultural institutions that authorize religious discourses and practices. Their work demonstrates the importance of understanding cultural relevance and "collectivistic religiosity." Political scientists can be too eager to assume an instrumentalist perspective that political leaders merely use religion to manipulate the masses or to press for religion and its anti-liberal effects to be overcome as society progresses toward a modern, politically secular state. Their cautionary tale reminds us that such normative analytical frames miss the nuances and importance of cultural readings of, for example, Burmese Buddhists' sermons.

Julia Leininger lifts up the importance of institutions and argues that democratization studies are still missing the "big picture" about the empirical relationship between religion and democratization. Taking Mali as a case study, she concludes that "its institutions, not theology" that help explain religious actors' influence on the process of establishing democratic rule. Here organizational and institutional factors outweigh other determinants considered by religious actors' and this uniqueness contributes to the wider study of religion in democratization.

Carefully detailing the dialectic between religious Zionism and the State of Israel, Moshe Hellinger, Isaac Hershkowitz, and Bernard Susser maintain that neither explanations of pragmatism or insistence on unity gets at the heart of settler's acquiescence to the State of Israel. Rather than militant religious messianism leading to a defiant, adversarial, anti-system politics, in Israel religious messianic beliefs *both* encourage and discourage anti-system behavior leading to a troubled but generally pacific truce. This theological-normative balance reflects the Zionists settlers' unique

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relationship to the State, which holds a profound religious significance, and their perceived obligation to disobey state law when it restricts the building of settlements and *a fortiori* when it orders their dismantling.

We have thoroughly enjoyed putting this collection together. We hope you find the articulations of case-study detail and the authors' contribution to our knowledge of the intersection of religion and politics as fascinating as we have.

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