Religious Freedom and Violent Religious Extremism: A Sourcebook of Modern Cases and Analysis

The Religious Freedom Project
Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs
Georgetown University

Authors:
Peter Henne, Research Associate, Religious Freedom Project;
Sarabrynn Hudgins, Research Assistant, Religious Freedom Project;
and Timothy Samuel Shah, Associate Director & Scholar in Residence, Religious Freedom Project

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The Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares that, “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.” So understood, religious freedom includes the private right to believe—or not—in accordance with one’s conscience. It also includes the public right to express or “manifest” one’s beliefs in society. As such, religious freedom is among the most important of freedoms, enshrined in both international conventions and law and a multitude of national constitutions.

Despite its avowed importance, however, significant debate arises over the desirability and priority of religious freedom in practice. One area where debate is especially fierce, and especially consequential for the world, concerns violent religious extremism. “Violent religious extremism” encompasses all religious groups, communities, viewpoints, traditions, and ideologies that espouse and/or practice the deliberate infliction of violence in order to advance an agenda that is at least partly religious. This definition includes groups that have adopted violence in pursuit of their goals, as well as groups that advocate or justify violent actions by others.¹

Some argue that limitations on religious freedom—while they may be morally problematic—are sometimes necessary to curtail religious extremism, terrorism, and fanaticism and prevent societal strife. Even severe restrictions on religious freedom are justified if they can undermine the radical and destructive ideologies that inspired the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and other horrific acts of violence against innocent people. For example, Jordan’s systematic state control of mosques and religious education is believed to have achieved this worthy goal.² Others argue, however, that the costs of such limitations outweigh the benefits because restrictions on religious freedom may incubate and worsen violent religious extremism, while greater religious freedom can actually undermine extremism and minimize religious conflict.³

The enormous political changes associated with the Arab Spring have brought this vexing question to the forefront of scholarly conversation and policy debate.⁴ The autocracies of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, Muammar Gaddafi in Libya, and Zene El Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia violated basic human rights, but some analysts argue that at least they restrained the forces of violent religious extremism. With the collapse
of these regimes and the first steps towards greater freedom for religious actors to organize themselves as well as shape political affairs, especially in Egypt and Tunisia, some worry that the price of greater freedom is the unleashing of religious militancy in a wide range of forms—from more moderate to more extremist and violent—with unacceptable consequences for political stability, the long-term consolidation of democracy, and the treatment of religious minorities.5

At the same time, others argue that it may be too soon to judge the long-term impact of greater freedom on religious extremism in the nations affected by the Arab Spring. For one thing, full and equal freedom for all religious groups to exercise their faith in private and public life has yet to be institutionalized in any country shaped by the Arab Spring. In addition, there is evidence to suggest that the real reason Islamist forces exercise an out-sized influence in Egypt and Tunisia today is not the new context of freedom per se but the cumulative impact of decades of selective autocracy, in which some Islamist groups enjoyed limited autonomy while a wide variety of other groups (including secular, liberal, and conservative Islamist and Salafist groups) faced systematic repression and exclusion. This fact has put some Islamist groups—most notably the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt—at a distinct advantage over their political and religious competitors in the present context. On this line of analysis, to the extent that groups seeking to challenge extremist forms of Islamism continue to enjoy greater freedom and equality in civil and political society, the electoral and political dominance of the Muslim Brotherhood and similar groups will almost certainly diminish over time. Furthermore, freedom and open political competition will likely expose and deepen divisions within Islamist movements, reducing their power in the long run.6

The Religious Freedom Project designed this sourcebook to assist scholars, students, media, policy experts, and other interested parties in exploring the complex relationship between religious freedom and violent religious extremism. The case studies are accompanied by a select annotated bibliography of scholarly works, a listing of useful data sets, suggestions for further reading, and a bibliography of sources cited.

**HOW RELIGIOUS FREEDOM CAN CURB VIOLENT RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM**

Numerous scholars and human rights advocates point to religious freedom as an essential element of modern political and civil freedoms. Many claim that the significance of religious beliefs makes the protection of religious freedom a priority. Some see religious freedom as the canary in the coal mine for broader political and civil rights: when religious freedom begins to be curtailed in a society, other antidemocratic measures—like censorship of the media, erosion of free assembly, and undermining electoral procedures—are likely to follow.7 There are counterarguments to the desirability of religious freedom, however, as the debate about the Arab Spring
suggests. Some claim that the spread of new religions can be detrimental to social cohesion and stability. Limitations on proselytizing activity by some groups or on the growth of immigrant communities from particular religions are considered necessary. Concerns about religiously-based terrorism make policies designed to limit extremist groups and promote moderate religious visions attractive to governments around the world. These debates show little sign of ending, and have persisted in part because they seem to pit principle against prudence.

The evidence adduced in this sourcebook suggests that limits on religious freedom may encourage extremist violence for several reasons. Governments often seek to control religion because religious ideas and actors can serve to legitimize state authorities and institutions and, conversely, can threaten political power by providing a source of authority beyond the state. Such governments typically attempt to exercise control by supporting and manipulating particular religious traditions. For example, the Saudi Arabian government promotes an ultra-conservative brand of Islam at home and abroad. Such a policy gives extremist elements within the official religion significant influence, increasing intolerance and strife in the country, an effect that has occurred not only in Saudi Arabia but also in countries not generally known for their religious extremism. Consider Sri Lanka, where close ties between official Sinhalese nationalism and Buddhist institutions and beliefs have contributed to long-standing conflict between the mostly Buddhist Sinhalese majority and the mostly Hindu Tamil minority.

The repression that often accompanies restrictions on religious freedom can also radicalize religious communities. State actions such as criminal prosecutions for blasphemy, media censorship, detention of religious activists, and tacit support for civilian violence can undermine the power of religious moderates, radicalize some religious elements, and increase the appeal of those advocating violent means of struggle against the state. This phenomenon can be seen in the repression of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt under former president Gamal Abdel Nasser. The brutal treatment of Muslim Brotherhood scholar Sayyid Qutb and Islamist leader and later head of Al Qaeda Ayman al-Zawahiri contributed to their extremist views on religion and politics, which, in turn, inspired religious militants and terrorists in Egypt and beyond.

These case studies do not suggest that the restriction of religious freedom always or inevitably causes violent religious extremism, or that the institution of religious freedom always or inevitably prevents or moderates violent religious extremism. Human beings are belief-motivated moral agents, after all, not billiard balls. But it appears that religious repression can indeed serve as a significant contributor to religiously-motivated violence. Likewise, expanded religious freedom can serve to minimize or prevent the mobilization of violent religious extremism. For example, religious freedom may reduce the ability of a favored religious group to maintain a coercive monopoly over society, thus making it less likely that
disfavored religious groups will react with campaigns of extremist violence. To the extent that religious freedom contributes to the development of civil society and social capital, it can limit the powers of the state itself and involve religious communities in the ameliorative social, economic, intellectual, and political processes of democratic competition. An open public sphere may allow for a plurality of religious perspectives, limiting the ability of religious extremists to monopolize religious orthodoxy and dominate debate.\textsuperscript{14}

\textbf{POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND VIOLENT RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM}

This sourcebook represents an exploratory study. It demonstrates that the connections between religious freedom and violent extremism are strong enough to demand more sustained and systematic attention—by scholars, the media, and policymakers—than they have generally received. In order to guide and focus the reader’s own analysis of the case studies and synopses of current scholarship that follow, it may be helpful to provide an analytical typology of pathways whereby religious freedom and religious extremism are sometimes connected.

These pathways reflect the diversity of religious practices and government policies toward religion around the world. It is clear that religious freedom contributes to the curbing of violent extremism under some conditions, but the ways it does so depends on numerous factors, including the nature of the religious beliefs involved, as well as political, economic, and social dynamics. By the same token, it is clear that religious repression often leads to greater violent extremism, but the ways in which this relationship occurs are contingent on external factors. And, in either case, the pathways are not mutually exclusive. More than one may be present in a given country.\textsuperscript{15}

In short, the evidence suggests that the connections between religious freedom and religious extremism may be both negative and positive. Negatively, the absence or lack of religious freedom may encourage or contribute to the origin and spread of violent religious extremism. Positively, the presence of religious freedom may moderate, contain, counteract, or prevent the origin and spread of violent religious extremism.

Negative pathways can be divided into two sets—those that relate to state favoritism towards religion and those arising from state repression. When states support certain religious groups—or certain traditions within a given religion—at the expense of others, this state support can contribute to violent religious extremism through the pathways of \textit{state sponsorship} and \textit{outbidding}. And when states restrict religious groups, they can contribute to violent religious extremism through the \textit{repression-reaction}, \textit{microphone-megaphone}, and \textit{insulation pathways}. The two sets may overlap,
as when, for example, government sponsorship of a particular religion or religious interpretation is accompanied by restrictions of religious practice.

The five different negative pathways are as follows:

1. The state sponsorship pathway. Political regimes that suppress religious freedom often rest on religious ideologies that cause them—as a matter of policy—to support, sponsor, or directly organize violent religious extremism as well. The same religious factors and motives that may cause a regime to impose a particular religious tradition on its people may cause it to practice, sponsor, or encourage violent religious extremism targeted against particular groups. In fact, a new study by the Pew Research Center, “Rising Tide of Restrictions on Religion” (September 2012), found that the type of government policy most strongly associated with “social hostilities” involving religion or internal religious violence is government sponsorship or favoritism toward one religion over others. Furthermore, state-sponsored or state-encouraged extremism can spill over national borders and travel far beyond the country of its inception. Among the case studies that follow, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, and Saudi Arabia perhaps best illustrate this pathway.

2. The outbidding pathway. Regimes that repress religious freedom are often state-sponsored religious monopolies that derive their legitimacy from their fidelity to a particular brand of religious orthodoxy. The legitimacy of such religiously repressive regimes rests on their putative religious purity. Because of this close relationship between political legitimacy and religious purity, such regimes are vulnerable to the charge that they are not as religiously pure and orthodox as they claim and are therefore illegitimate. This can encourage more extreme religious groups to “outbid” the regime in its religious purity and attempt to establish a more religiously faithful and legitimate regime—by violence if necessary. Saudi Arabia is a powerful illustration of this pathway, as the professed purity of the Saudi kingdom has been repeatedly challenged as shallow and hypocritical by a succession of ultra-conservative Islamists, including Osama bin Laden.

3. The repression-reaction pathway. Under some conditions, religious repression can encourage a violent religious reaction on the part of the religious groups being repressed. These groups may undertake reactive violence with varying degrees of ambition—to defend themselves from further violence, to eliminate the religiously repressive regime, to undertake a secessionist struggle to carve out territory independent of the repressive regime, or to replace the religiously repressive regime with another regime. Iran, Mexico, Russia, and Sri Lanka illustrate this pathway, as does Turkey’s treatment of its minority Kurdish populations, especially in the twentieth century and the role of fervent Shi’a Muslims in the overthrow of the shah in 1979 in Iran.

4. The microphone-megaphone pathway. Religious groups without access to
peaceful and legal means of influencing society—“microphones”—are more likely to use violent and illegal means of forcing society to call attention to their agenda—“megaphones.” In this pathway, it is not systematic religious persecution alone but the silencing of religious voices that contributes to reactive violence. Such silencing or marginalization of religious voices need not include or be accompanied by the violent persecution of religious individuals, institutions, or practices. Algeria and Turkey illustrate this pathway, as does the Hindu nationalist dominance achieved in India under the Bharatiya Janata Party.

5. **The insulation pathway.** Regimes that repress or fail to respect religious freedom foster social and intellectual environments that insulate extremist religious groups from criticism and competition. This insulation may result even where the regime does not directly support or sponsor the violent extremist groups in question. Pakistan illustrates this pathway, especially with recent blasphemy-related violence.

There are also two positive pathways whereby the presence of religious freedom discourages religious extremism. They are:

1. **The pluralism pathway.** The lack of widespread religious persecution in a society can minimize violent extremism through the sociological consequences of pluralism. When governments and societies simply refrain from engaging in widespread religious persecution and refrain from systematically privileging any particular religious group or tradition in society, this permits a proliferation of interpretations of traditions and unfettered practices by religious groups, both minorities and majorities. Because no specific religious group or sentiment is favored by the state, a general religious pluralism can arise in which all groups recognize the legitimate exercise of faith by others. And because of this pluralism, elites have less incentive to appeal to religious division or extremism to gain political support. While pluralism of this kind is more likely in societies that already have religious diversity, it is also possible in religiously homogeneous societies where differing interpretations nonetheless exist within the majority community. In addition, as James Madison argued in *The Federalist Papers*, the mere existence of a diversity of religious “factions” in a large nation-state can make it difficult if not impossible for any one faction to dominate society as a whole. Moreover, this can lead to a de facto “marketplace of ideas,” in which extremist groups must operate alongside numerous religious competitors, at least some of whom will advance anti-extremist views. Even though there may be some groups that espouse or even practice violent extremism in religiously free societies, in a context of pluralism such groups will often face intense challenge and criticism from other groups.

2. **The inclusion-moderation pathway.** The official presence and practice of a wide religious freedom that permits all religious groups to express their faith in private and public (as opposed to the de facto sociological pluralism that often results from the mere absence of religious persecution) gives otherwise extremist religious
groups the opportunity to shape politics and public life through non-violent means. The practice of a robust form of religious freedom that invites the formal inclusion of religious voices in politics and public life can give religious groups a path to influencing society that is an alternative to the path of violent extremism.26 That is, not only can the de facto absence of religious repression remove various causes of violent extremism or contain and reduce its consequences, but the legally established and politically enforced de jure presence of religious freedom—that is, the legal equality of all religious individuals and groups—can encourage the evolution of violent and extremist groups into more politically moderate forms.27 Turkey’s inclusion of the mildly-Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP) demonstrates this mechanism.

The case studies presented herein demonstrate the validity of the relationship between religious freedom and violent religious extremism under some conditions. They also demonstrate the pathways connecting these two phenomena. They include cases from a variety of religious traditions, underscoring that this relationship is not unique to Muslim-majority countries. Nor is the relationship always negative. The cases explore the relationship between religious freedom and religious extremism but do not provide in-depth historical overviews or comprehensive religious analysis of particular countries. Moreover, they are not meant to suggest that religious freedom is the only or most important variable in the development of violent extremism. Each study presents a historical overview, the status and changing levels of religious freedom and violent religious extremism in the country, and the pathways connecting the two.28

OVERVIEW OF THE SOURCEBOOK

Part one of the sourcebook consists of case studies in which religion-based violent extremism is or has been systematically interrelated with restrictions on religious freedom. These include cases in which restrictions on religious freedom contributed to the rise of violent religious extremism across a wide range of countries, representing diverse religious traditions. These include Muslim-majority countries (Algeria, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey), two Christian-majority countries (Mexico and Russia), a Hindu-majority country (India), and a Buddhist-majority country (Sri Lanka). We also present the case of Muslim-majority Senegal, where religious freedom and the accommodation of religious belief seem to play a role in preventing the rise of violent religious extremism and societal strife involving religion. Taken together the case studies strongly suggest that under some conditions limitations on religious freedom play a powerful role in catalyzing, deepening, and prolonging violent religious extremism and severe societal strife.

Part two contains a description of the sourcebook’s methodology, a select annotated bibliography of scholarly studies that address religious freedom and violent extremism, a list of data sets that may be of interest to readers, suggestions for further reading, and a bibliography of sources cited in this sourcebook.

See discussions on reforms in Islamic education in the country in Fattah’s “Jordan reconsiders its Islamic teachings,” 2005.

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For a summary of such views, see Allam, “Extremists Finding New Ground as Arab Spring Ideals Vanish,” 2012; MacFarquhar, “Tunisia Battles Over Pulpits, and Revolt’s Legacy,” 2012. The latter story reported that the revolution in Tunisia has relaxed religious repression in a way that appears to have helped some religious extremists in the short run: “Revolution freed the country’s estimated 5,000 officially sanctioned mosques from the rigid controls of the previous government, which appointed every prayer leader and issued lists of acceptable topics for their Friday sermons.” The story continues: “That system pushed a moderate, apolitical model of Islam that avoided confronting a dictator. When the system collapsed last year, ultraconservative Salafis seized control of up to 500 mosques by government estimates. The government, a proponent of a more temperate political Islam, says it has since wrested back control of all but 70 of the mosques, but acknowledges it has not yet routed the extremists nor thwarted their agenda.”

For a discussion of many of these arguments, see Lynch, 2012.


Little, 1994.

Wright, 2006, explains that “one line of thinking proposes that America’s tragedy on September 11 was born in the prisons of Egypt. Human-rights advocates in Cairo argue that torture created an appetite for revenge, first in Sayyid Qutb and later in his acolytes, including Ayman al-Zawahiri…. Egypt’s prisons became a factory for producing militants whose need for retribution—they called it justice—was all-consuming” (52).

For more discussion on this point, see the “Scope and Methodology” section.


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“Rising Tide of Religious Restrictions,” 2012. This report found that “government policies or actions that clearly favor one religion over others have the strongest association with social hostilities involving religion. The average level of social hostilities among the countries with very high levels of government favoritism (SHI [Social Hostilities Index] = 4.8) is much higher than the average level of social hostilities among countries with low levels of government favoritism (1.3)…. “ (p. 19). The report defines “social hostilities involving religion” as “acts of religious hostility by private individuals, organizations and social groups.” It goes on to say that “[t]his includes mob or sectarian violence, harassment over attire for religious reasons and other religion-related intimidation or abuse” (p. 11). The Pew Research Center’s concept of “social hostilities,” then, overlaps significantly with the concept of “violent religious extremism” used in this report.


24 Madison, Federalist No. 10, in Madison, Hamilton and Jay, 1787-1788.
26 See further discussions on democracy versus liberalism in Plattner, “Liberalism and Democracy: Can’t Have One Without the Other,” 1998.
28 For more discussion on this point, see the “Scope and Methodology” section.
SUMMARY

Political violence in Algeria is an example of how religious repression directly contributed to a reaction that assumed the form of violent religious extremism. Algeria was a single-party authoritarian state that gained independence from France in 1962. The authoritarian government routinely employed Islamic beliefs in promoting its version of Algerian nationalism, while also limiting the freedom and political activity of Islamist and other opposition groups. An economic and political crisis in the 1980s led to a political opening, and enabled an Islamist party to win the first round of parliamentary elections. The military then canceled the elections and clamped down on Islamic political activity. This exclusion, an example of the *microphone-megaphone pathway,* caused radical factions of the Islamist group to launch a civil war that spanned the 1990s and involved brutal attacks against civilians. Although the fighting had mostly ended by the early 2000s, extremist groups—now merged with the transnational Al-Qaeda network—continued to operate, and the Algerian government has placed increasing restrictions on religious freedom in the country.

“ALGERIA IS MY COUNTRY, ISLAM IS MY RELIGION, AND ARABIC IS MY LANGUAGE”

Modern Algeria emerged with the country’s independence in 1962, after a brutal revolutionary war against the French colonial authorities. Although the authoritarian government employed Islam in its official definition of Algerian identity, and incorporated some Islamic law into its policies, the state was generally wary of Islamist groups and limited their ability to function. By the 1980s an economic crisis undermined the government’s popular support, leading to some political violence in the country.

The French had taken control of Algeria in the early nineteenth century, and ruled it as a colonial possession until 1962. During the colonial period, numerous French settlers moved to Algeria and French colonial authorities attempted to westernize the country. Algerians began to resist westernization in the 1930s, fed by a new Algerian nationalism based on Islam. For example, the motto of the Association of Algerian Muslim Ulama was “Algeria is my Country, Islam is my Religion, and Arabic is my Language.” By the 1950s, Algerians were openly revolting against French rule, and in 1954 the National Liberation Front (FLN) declared war against France. The conflict
lasted throughout the 1950s and resulted in savage violence against both Algerian citizens and French settlers.

The regime that emerged was a single-party authoritarian state. The FLN restricted political activities and adopted socialist economic policies. The government also took an antagonistic stance toward political opposition, including Islamist groups, severely restricting their ability to operate and repressing any dissent. The government attempted to control all religious expression in the country, including how Islam was taught in schools and preached. It based its social policies on Islam, such as the 1984 Family Code that drew heavily on conservative interpretations of Islamic law.

By the 1980s the Algerian government was struggling to maintain power. An acute economic crisis, provoked by depressed oil prices and a population surge, undermined the government's legitimacy. Political violence increased in this period, with opposition to the state emerging from Berber groups and Islamists. These tensions culminated in widespread riots in the late 1980s, at which point President Benjedid legalized opposition parties and announced elections to be held in 1991.

**POLITICAL REPRES SION AND CIVIL WAR**

Algeria's political and economic crisis of the late 1980s came at a time of increasing Islamic activism in the country and a generally hostile attitude towards religion on the part of the state. The unexpected success of an Islamist party in the 1991 elections led to military cancellation of the results and repression of religiously-based political groups. The sudden restriction on both religious and political freedom resulted in a bloody civil war and the rise of brutally violent extremist groups with ties to transnational terrorism.

The 1991 elections demonstrated the political power of Islamist groups in the country. The Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), formed after Benjedid's reforms, campaigned on a platform of economic and political reform along Islamic lines. FIS gained significant support—much of which came from urban areas—and won numerous seats in the local elections of 1990. Subsequently, FIS had a strong showing in the first round of the 1991 parliamentary elections.

This threat to the ruling elite combined with FIS' Islamist nature prompted the military to intervene in the political process. The military canceled the election results and removed President Benjedid from power. They also imposed a state of emergency, banned religious parties, and began mass arrests of FIS members and suspected sympathizers.

The military's actions catalyzed a civil war. Although some radical offshoots of the FIS began fighting against the regime before the canceled elections, the military's overt intervention led to widespread violent resistance. Combatants included factions
of FIS—such as the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS)—and more radical offshoots like the Armed Islamic Group (GIA). The GIA aspired to establish an Islamic state, and justified its struggle against the military regime through appeals to religion and the regime’s perceived crimes against Islam.\textsuperscript{30} GIA also had ties to the Al-Qaeda network. Some of its leaders had fought in Afghanistan, and the group received support from Osama bin Laden in its struggle.\textsuperscript{31} The GIA adopted savage tactics, killing foreigners, journalists and civilians in addition to military personnel. Their fighting soon devolved into wholesale massacres of civilians deemed sympathetic to the government.\textsuperscript{32}

The GIA’s brutality ultimately proved self-defeating, as its tactics turned the public and supporters against it. Even bin Laden withdrew his support for the GIA and helped to orchestrate the rise of an alternative militant organization, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC).\textsuperscript{33} The GSPC had goals similar to those of the GIA, with one of its leaders even declaring that the group is in a “war between the camp of Islam and the camp of the Cross,” with “apostates,” such as the Algerian regime, falling into the latter.\textsuperscript{34} Yet, while the GSPC was certainly violent and continued to kill civilians, it attempted to avoid the mass-casualty attacks of the GIA. The combination of a split within its ranks and increased military operations led to the GIA essentially ceasing operations by the early 2000s.

The civil war itself ended around this period. The government, which had been negotiating with the AIS, worked out an amnesty deal in 1999. Many fighters took advantage of this, and AIS disbanded in 2000. This was followed by another amnesty enacted in 2006 for both militants and military personnel. Although the GSPC continued to operate in this period, its violence occurred at a much lower level than in the 1990s.

**CONTINUING PROBLEMS**

Despite the severity of the civil war, by the late 1990s the Algerian military had gained the upper hand against the militants. The GIA had been eclipsed by the GSPC, and the latter group gradually lost influence. Political violence in Algeria has not ceased altogether, however. The GSPC continues to operate—under its new name, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)—and has expanded to surrounding countries, as well as deepening its ties with the remaining core leadership of al Qaeda. The status of religious freedom in Algeria continues to deteriorate.

The end of the civil war did not improve the status of religious freedom in the country. The Algerian government has continued its authoritarian practices towards opposition groups and has increased its control of Islamic education and preaching, with the 2001 Penal Code specifying punishments for unofficial preaching.\textsuperscript{35} In recent years the government has also increased restrictions on non-Muslims through Ordinance 06-03, which took effect in 2008. The ordinance limits the ability of non-Muslims to preach, conduct religious services, and proselytize, with several arrests
under the law occurring since it went into effect.\textsuperscript{36}

Political violence has continued in Algeria, due in part to the GSPC’s transnational ties. The 2007 merging of the GSPC with Al-Qaeda has resulted in some changes to political violence in the country, including the introduction of suicide bombings.\textsuperscript{37} Much of the group’s violence, however, involves low-level bombings or kidnappings, including the seizing of several foreign tourists. AQIM has also launched attacks in the neighboring countries of Mali and Mauritania.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{29}See page 8 of this text’s introduction for further information on this pathway.
\textsuperscript{30}Kepel, 2002.
\textsuperscript{31}Schanzer, 2005, chapter 5; Gunaratna, 2003, page 183; Schanzer, 2005, page 10.
\textsuperscript{32}Stone, 1997, pages 180, 192-196.
\textsuperscript{33}Schanzer, 2005, chapter 5.
\textsuperscript{34}Ibid., page 95.
\textsuperscript{36}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{37}Renard, “Aqim’s Offensive Reveals Shift from Insurgency to Terrorist Tactics in Algeria,” 2008.
\textsuperscript{38}For further information on AQIM, see Hansen and Vriens, “Backgrounder: Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb,” 2009.
Serving as the birthplace of four of the world’s major religions—Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism, and Sikhism—India is one of the most religiously diverse countries in the world.\textsuperscript{39} Although national laws enshrine universal religious equality, they do little to mitigate state-level laws that restrict this freedom.\textsuperscript{40} Pockets of religious repression persist especially in areas governed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a Hindu nationalist party devoted to representing the rights and values of India’s Hindu majority.

State repression of religious freedom most often comes in the form of criminal prosecution of converts. In other cases such as riots or other violent incidents, individuals or groups target religious minorities with little fear of prosecution. An overburdened court system prevents the speedy punishment of violent offenders.\textsuperscript{41} Incidents like a 1992 mosque attack—in which Hindu militants attacked patrons on the grounds that the building occupied the birthplace of the Hindu god Rama—reflect “communalism,” a phenomenon in which Indian identities and social strata are constructed along ethnic and religious lines. Indian communalism often sparks sectarian violence so that minority populations feel that “their continued survival depends upon the goodwill of the majority Hindu population.”\textsuperscript{42}

Restrictions on religion in India emanate from the \textit{Hindutva} ideology, which holds that Hinduism represents India’s one, true culture—a philosophy that delegitimizes other religions. As described in the \textit{microphone-megaphone pathway},\textsuperscript{43} alternative voices are increasingly marginalized in a manner that alienates minorities and spurs them to illegal and sometimes violent reactions.

**LITERAL RELIGIOUS DIVIDES**

The modern state of India was formed on religious grounds when the colonial British partitioned India and Pakistan (including what is now Bangladesh) in 1947 with the goal of having India serve as a predominantly Hindu homeland and Pakistan to serve as home for the subcontinent’s Muslims. The partition sparked riots in which more than 500,000 people died.\textsuperscript{44} In one of the world’s largest mass migrations, more than ten million refugees moved from one territory to the other.\textsuperscript{45}
This split increased the proportion of Hindus in India from 66 percent to 85 percent, but the new state nonetheless featured a sizable population of non-Hindus. The Muslim population decreased to 10 percent of the whole, reinforcing a desire to establish a collective Muslim identity. While most of India’s 28 states feature Hindu majorities, three have Christian majorities (Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Mizoram). Muslims constitute the majority population in the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

The country’s complex religious make-up highlights Indians’ common status concerns. Indians of every faith recognize that their majority status in one area does not protect their co-religionists who are minorities elsewhere. This awareness of reciprocal vulnerability limits violence, but tensions sometimes boil over into communal rioting. Political scientist Paul Brass faults an “institutionalized riot system”...[in which] a triggering incident [becomes] a conflagration through well-worn channels of communication and alert cadres of activists. When local communities and their governing officials fail adequately to address grievances, perceived or legitimate, they can grow and fester as enduring communal wounds. Religious and ethnic leaders can seize on these perceived sleights to mobilize civil discord according to their political or religious goals. Riots are sometimes galvanized by one group’s accusation of another’s desecration of their religious sites. The tension builds to the point of “a critical mass of ambient frustration” that boils over.

THE STATE CONTENTS WITH DIVERSITY

Widespread intra-religious diversity also challenges peace in India. In some areas like the town of Lucknow, Sunni and Shi’a Muslim sects come into conflict more regularly and violently than either group does with their Hindu neighbors. Hindus are divided among various sects without an overarching unifying text or primary historic religious figure around which to rally. Hinduism also lacks a supreme leader or clear hierarchy.

Discrimination and separation also persist through the caste system. Many Indian Christians were Dalit “untouchables” who converted in an effort to escape their caste status. Conversion did little, however, to change deeply ingrained “patterns of marriage and social contract” that are common in Christian, as well as Hindu, communities. Many converted Christians experienced a backlash from other sectors of Indian society.

Facing this complex demography, India’s first post-partition Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, synthesized his own rationalist belief in secularism with the views of Gandhi, the revered Hindu leader who esteemed all religions and espoused that “a state based on a single religion was ‘worse than undemocratic’.” Nehru helped establish India’s parliamentary democracy under the belief that “in a country like India, which has many faiths and religions, no real nationalism can be built except on the basis of secularity.”

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND VIOLENT RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM
The 1950 Constitution declares India a “sovereign socialist democratic republic.” No single religion is highlighted, and Article 25 proclaims the right to “freely profess, practice and propagate religion.” This latter provision is seen as a concession “particularly [to] Muslims and Christians, who maintained that preaching and propagating their faith was an essential part of their religion.” The word “secular” became an official descriptor of the Indian republic via a 1976 amendment.

While these provisions seemed to establish legal equality for all religious traditions, they did not prevent an aggressive regulation of religion that had the effect of privileging one above others. Religion is absent from public schools, for example, but Hindu nationalist politicians have successfully applied Hindu ideals to all residents of the state of Karnataka by criminalizing the slaughter of cows and consumption and possession of beef.

**LEGAL EQUALITY?**

In fact, India’s attempt to establish legal religious equality for all religions has not succeeded. Rather, it has amounted to a “restatement of the traditional doctrine of Hindu tolerance” that has had the actual effect of denying equal protections for minorities. For example, some minority requests have been rejected on the grounds of protecting an essentially Hindu national unity. Sikhs were rebuffed when they requested that the Punjab boundaries be restructured to create a Sikh majority in the state. Muslim demands for quotas of parliamentary seats were dismissed. Hindu tolerance does not extend to the rights of conversion or proselytizing. Several states ban conversion “by ‘allurements or force,’” restrictions upheld in a 1977 Supreme Court ruling that distinguished between propagation and conversion, permitting the former and implicitly dissuading Indians from the latter.

Indian officials have taken some steps to reduce gaps in the protection of religious freedom. The Indian Parliament sought to increase protections for non-Hindus by the establishment in 1993 of the National Commission for Minorities, which names Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, Parsis, and Sikhs as minority communities. This body is charged with investigating cases of discrimination and recommending responses to local and state governments. Complaints to the commission increased to 2,268 in 2008-2009 from 1,508 in 2007-2008. Unfortunately, minority groups not identified as such by the commission may be subject to greater discrimination.

**CLASHES INCREASE**

The last three decades have witnessed an increase in violence as minority communities have encountered state restrictions on their religious rights. The Indian Ministry of Home Affairs reported that communal incidents in which more than one hundred people died numbered more than 800 per year in recent years. Notable occurrences
include the decade-long Sikh rebellion in the Punjab in the 1980s and early 1990s, ongoing fighting in Kashmir, and a series of Christian rebellions in northeast India that have persisted since the 1990s (though the last of these appear to have been peacefully resolved in recent years). Direct conflict also occasionally occurs between India’s two largest religious communities, Hindus and Muslims. Many confessional riots have become case studies in the scholarly examination of religious violence in India, including the 2002 killing of more than 1,000 Muslims in Gujarat and the 2008 incident in which a small band of Muslim militants—with support from inside Pakistan’s powerful intelligence services—killed 173 people on a days-long shooting campaign in Mumbai.68

Some observers blame Hindu political parties for intentionally stoking sectarian tensions, claiming that they desire rioting in order to reinforce the idea that Muslims are an internal enemy requiring a strong political hand. Muslim communities in turn dismiss India’s state secularism “as a screen behind which India’s Hindu majority determines national policy.”69

Christians too are targets of sporadic communal violence, as when Hindus reacted to the slaying of a well-known religious leader by attacking Christians in Orissa, despite the fact that no evidence linked Christians to the crime.70 Distrust of Christians as foreigners persists despite evidence of a Christian presence in India more than 1,500 years ago.71 The discrimination has arguably contributed to violence by some Christian groups—an example of the microphone-megaphone pathway.72 For example, the National Liberation Front of Tripura, operating in Northeastern India, forced people to convert to Christianity and killed those Hindus who refused.

Non-Hindus decry what they perceive as restrictive Hindu nationalism. The Constitution states that “reference to Hindus shall be construed as including a reference to persons professing the Sikh, Jaina or Buddhist religion.”73 This official amalgamation offends some Buddhists, who reject India’s pervasive caste system and whose religion is in fact indigenous to India. Sikhs are dismissively viewed by many Hindus as lapsed Hindus.74 Dalits, who have coalesced as a community in recent years, often reject Hindu nationalism on the grounds that it is based on the discriminatory caste system rather than on the Hindu religion of which they are often nominally a part.75

The parliamentary coalition dominated by the Hindu-nationalist BJP lost national elections in 2004 to the ruling United Progressive Alliance (UPA), dominated by the Congress Party, which stresses a secular ideology that honors religious pluralism.76 But the BJP retains great influence in setting the national agenda. It nominally supports minority protections but also insists “that the national culture is a Hindu one.”77 The
BJP believes that India’s status as the “cradle of Hindu civilization” precludes religious neutrality. The BJP today possesses the second-largest number of parliamentary seats and cultivates a highly-organized and highly-motivated bevy of supporters.

CHALLENGES FACING INDIA’S MUSLIMS

Muslims resent the uneven application of police and judicial powers, especially under the BJP. Today’s Indian Muslims live primarily in several northern states but also form a sizable minority in the southern state of Kerala. They complain of “disproportionately high rates of incarceration, illiteracy, poverty and health problems,” at least some of which may be attributed to Indian political and judicial institutions. A 2006 government report conceded that Indian Muslims encounter “systematic and widespread inequality, discrimination and underdevelopment” and are “disproportionately excluded from civil service jobs, police and military ranks, and political office.”

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom judged that the BJP was partly responsible for growing communal violence in recent years, noting in 2003 that there had been an “atmosphere of impunity for the perpetrators of the [anti-Muslim] Gujarat riots.” Such violent episodes against non-Hindus coincided with the national ascendancy of the BJP. Many Muslims across India felt more vulnerable when the BJP won a commanding majority in the Gujarat state elections held less than a year after the February-March 2002 anti-Muslim pogrom—an electoral victory that many Indians interpreted as a vindication of strident Hindu nationalism in Gujarat and its most vocal spokesman, Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi, who is widely believed to have been complicit in the violence. Some observers worry about the consequences of BJP propaganda, which accuses Muslims of violent tendencies and allegiance to Pakistan. Only two of India’s nearly 550 political parties are explicitly Muslim, and even these face questions about whether or not they accurately represent and encompass the diverse Indian Muslim population. In short, nominal legal equality does little to give many Indian Muslims an effective voice in the political system, especially when some feel that they must bear the burden of demonstrating that they are neither terrorists nor scheming against the Indian state.

As predicted in the microphone-megaphone pathway, the marginalization of religious minorities may prompt some groups to turn to violent extremism as a means of influencing a system that appears unresponsive to their grievances. The Students Islamic Movement of India, founded as an Islamic student organization in 1977, incrementally radicalized in response to rising levels of communal violence. Some claim the group is linked to the Pakistani-backed Lashkar-e-Taiba, the terror group responsible for the December 2001 attack of New Delhi’s Parliament, the 2006 Mumbai train attacks, and the 2008 attacks in Mumbai.
Overall, India’s democratic framework provides a strong starting point for true religious freedom, but the need for continued movement toward that goal is significant. Religious violence is a constant threat, and tension between religious communities generally does not ameliorate with time. Even stable locations such as Malerkotla, a multiethnic city in Indian Punjab often cited as a bastion of tolerance and peace, have a “history replete with periods of conflict between the local Muslim majority and the Hindu and Sikh populations.”

Christians comprise 2.3 percent of India’s population and thus number more than 24 million. Muslims, despite their minority status in most of India, actually represent the second-largest Muslim population in the world. Muslims “remain caught between suspicion and exceptionalism” while Sikhs are often mistrusted or lumped in with Hindus, much to their dismay. These sizable communities criticize Hindu nationalists for discouraging minority groups’ participation in government and public life. The BJP’s growth shows that Hindu dominance also poses a growing, if not yet dominant, threat to India’s legal framework of religious freedom. In this atmosphere, and without a consistent, effective state policy for protecting minorities and addressing their grievances, outbreaks of religiously-motivated violence, especially by minority groups, remain a constant possibility.

40Ibid.
41Ibid., page 3.
43See page 8 in this text’s introduction for further information on this pathway.
44Brass, 2003, page 75.
45Metcalf and Metcalf, 2006, page 222.
49Ibid., page 1.
50Ibid., page 17.
51Ibid.
52Ibid., page 18.
54Ibid.
55Ibid.
60Mahajan and Delhi, 2006, page 3.
64Ibid., page 62.

Ibid., page 4.


Ibid., page 5.

Ibid., page 62.

Ibid.

See page 8 in this text’s introduction for further information on this pathway.


Ibid.

Ibid., page 162.


Bigelow, 2010, page 16

Adeney and Wyatt, 2010, page 60.

“Social, Economic, and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India,” 2006.


Ibid., page 15.

Ibid., page 15.

Ibid.


Ibid., 2010, page 16.


See page 8 in this text’s introduction for further information on this pathway.


Bigelow, 2010.


Ibid., page 14.

Ibid., page 1.
Limitations on religious freedom affected Iranian society and politics both before and after the 1979 revolution. Ruler Reza Shah forcefully promoted a monarchical secular state and passed on repressive tendencies to his successor and Iran’s last monarch, his son Mohamed Reza Shah Pahlavi. Reflecting the repression-reaction pathway, restrictive measures radicalized some segments of the Iranian society and the clergy and eventually precipitated the regime’s downfall. Since the revolution a ‘sacred’ state has repressed religious thought and practice as an example of the state sponsorship pathway. The Iranian state maintains strict control by imposing its co-opted version of Shi’a Islam at the expense of religious minorities and alternative interpretations of Islam. Civil unrest persists while terror attacks have become persistent threats to Iran’s security.

**STRONG SECULARISM BRINGS REPRESSION**

Reza Shah gained power after overthrowing the long-standing Qajar dynasty in 1925. He fashioned himself as a new leader for a new time, one who would bring Iran into the modern world. Inspired by Turkey’s social and economic progress under Kemal Ataturk, Reza Shah favored an aggressive, hasty modernization agenda that curtailed religious freedom. Secularism was a major component of his reforms.

Reza Shah’s programs were particularly controversial when they raised questions about the proper role of women in the conservative Muslim society. His administration wanted Iranian women to take a more active role in their country’s social and economic life. For example, Reza Shah believed that women should have equal access to education and employment. When the University of Tehran opened in 1936, he insisted that it admit female as well as male students. His government actively encouraged the de-segregation of a secular society by ordering government employees to bring their unveiled women to official events and ceremonies.

Shortly after ascending to power, Reza Shah made moves toward forcing Iranian women to unveil. A 1935 Ministry of Education policy barred female students and teachers from receiving their diplomas or salaries if wearing veils. Similar policies catalyzed violence that same year when a ceremony in Shiraz honoring the education minister featured schoolgirls performing gymnastics exercises. Attendees walked out in protest and religious officials voiced their displeasure. Three clerics were then imprisoned or exiled.
Religious Iranians organized an enormous public protest against the state’s veiling policies in the Iranian religious center of Mashhad in July 1935. When subsequent gatherings at Goharshad Mosque saw rhetoric against the regime intensify, security forces attacked protestors, killing some pilgrims but failing to dislodge the crowd. The attacks brought vehement condemnations from clerics, whose outrage did not prevent security forces from again attacking the mosque and “several hundred people were machine-gunned by the Shah’s troops.”

Despite societal outcry, the ban on veiling was expanded country-wide and enforced from 1936 to 1941, when Reza Shah left the country following Iran’s invasion by allied forces. To enforce the policy, “directives were sent out to the provinces” instructing local authorities “to arrest and punish anyone, especially clerics, protesting against the policy openly, and to prevent veiled women from entering shops, cinemas, and public bath houses.” Veiled women were even barred “from receiving treatment in public clinics” and the police “frequently assaulted women physically and tore off their scarves or chadors.”

While popular reaction to the ban varied by region and societal groups, the vast majority of Iranians vehemently opposed the royal decree. Some women left the country in protest while others chose to stay indoors indefinitely. Since many Iranian houses did not have baths, women walked over neighbors’ rooftops, sometimes in the middle of the night, to get to the hammam, or public baths. Many Iranians today recount stories of humiliation at the hands of the police in that era. A well-known writer recounted the story of his father being arrested while carrying his mother to hammam in a sack. Although Reza Shah justified the policy as a means of bringing women into the mainstream of society, in some cases it produced the opposite effect. For example, “many girls in observant families were deprived of education, as their parents took them out of school.”

### VIOLENT BACKLASH

Reza Shah’s rapid modernization programs imposed top-down, radical changes. In particular, the veil ban and subsequent violent crackdowns on protestors radicalized devout Muslims throughout Iran. Reza Shah successfully contained his political and religious opponents by sending many clerics into exile or terrorizing them into fleeing the country. Reza Shah’s ban on veiling was certainly a major catalyst of collective anger and frustration. Some members of the clergy tacitly endorsed violence; would-be assassins typically asked one or more high-ranking religious scholars (marja) for a religious ruling (fatwa) before attempting political assassinations.

After the invasion of Iran by allied forces in 1941, Reza Shah was forced to resign and go into exile. He was replaced by his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who attempted to style himself a man of religion and lifted the ban his father had imposed on veiling. But the new shah was really a secular Muslim. Radical religious forces gradually grew...
suspicious and then hostile to his policies. Mohammad Reza shifted increasingly toward the authoritarian means that had been employed by his father, especially following a US- and UK-backed coup that overthrew democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh in 1953.

High-ranking clergy grew bolder in pushing Islamist activism, organizing devout Iranians and eventually sponsoring waves of political violence against the secular-leaning government. One such group, Fadayian Islam, carried out a number of high-profile assassinations, including that in 1946 of Ahmad Kasravi, a prominent historian whose writings the Fadaiyan labeled anti-Islamic. Over the next decade, they killed two prime ministers and injured at least two other high-ranking officials. Subsequent crackdowns in the mid-1950s stymied activity but its remaining members joined groups loyal to Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in the 1960s. These groups assassinated another prime minister and made two unsuccessful assassination attempts on the Shah.108

THE WHITE REVOLUTION FOMENTS RADICAL DISSENT

In 1963, the shah introduced a policy package designed to make dramatic changes in social and economic structures and relations in the country. Initially passed by the cabinet as separate bills between 1961 and 1962, this so-called White Revolution was officially announced by the shah in early January 1963 and approved through a national referendum later that month. At the time it included the six major principles of land reform, nationalization of forests and pastures, sale of state-owned enterprises to the public, workers’ sharing in corporate earnings, voting and political rights for women, and the formation of a literacy corps. From 1963 to 1977, other issue areas were added to these six principles.

The two most controversial elements of the White Revolution program were the land reform bill and women’s suffrage. Some clerical figures, including Ayatollah Khomeini, opposed the latter protocol and asked the shah to rescind it, calling it un-Islamic. This initiated a series of serious verbal confrontations between the shah and Khomeini that soon devolved into violent street demonstrations and an intensification of the struggle between the shah’s regime and the radical clergy.109 In one of his first reactions to Khomeini’s opposition, the shah referred to the clergy opposing his policy package as “black reactionary.”110 Two months later, Khomeini announced that the referendum had been a criminal act and launched his first personal attack on the shah. Khomeini was arrested, setting off multi-city protests whose violent suppression left many people dead. The clergy’s opposition to the White Revolution was due also to the land reform bill since many clergy members had strong allies among prominent landowners. In addition the clergy consistently made public reference to Reza Shah’s forced unveiling of women and the mass killings in Goharshad Mosque in 1935 as they attempted to draw parallels between these restrictions and his son’s intentions.
Following his 1963 detainment Khomeini was put under house arrest for about eight months, after which he ratcheted up his criticism of the Shah’s regime. In November 1964, Khomeini was arrested again and this time exiled from the country for fourteen years. During these years he continued to preach revolt against the Pahlavi rule and his messages and writings were regularly delivered into Iran for secret distribution.111

**RADICALIZATION OF THE CLERGY**

With a few rare exceptions, across modern Iranian history, the Shi’a clergy had largely withdrawn from public life, favoring quietism to political activism. One notable exception was the role played by clergy in the 1906 Constitutional Revolution, which led, for the first time in Iran’s history, to the establishment of a constitutional monarchy and an assembly in the country. But Reza Khan, when he came to power in 1925, reduced the nascent assembly to a rubber stamp for his policies, seriously curbing the role and reach of the clergy in Iranian politics.112

Reza Shah’s removal from power provided the space and opportunity for the clergy to engage in politics, but some were cautious, reminding their colleagues that the clergy’s involvement in the 1906 constitutional revolution had precipitated the anti-clerical Pahlavi’s rise to power. This group advised that the clergy to remain within the bounds of providing moral and educational teaching to the society and refrain from unnecessary involvement in political affairs.113

Yet, Reza Shah’s anti-religious postures and his treatment of the clergy had sown seeds of radicalization within some segments of Iranian society. The radicalization was manifest in acts of political violence carried out by the Fadaiyan from 1945 to 1955, which had the blessing of at least some figures within the clergy. Confrontations between Khomeini and the Shah in the early 1960s and the subsequent repression of Khomeini’s supporters pushed more clergy to the fringes of Pahlavi rule and under Khomeini’s leadership.

**OVERTHROW AND LOSS OF LEGITIMACY**

In the years following Khomeini’s exile, a number of intellectuals began speaking and writing about what they saw as the Pahlavis’ westernizing model of modernization. In doing so, they helped undermine the basis for the shah’s secular legitimacy and formulated the ideological foundations of the 1979 Islamic revolution. One such prominent intellectual was Ali Shariati, whose advocacy of Shi’a political activism and redefinition of central Shi’a Islamic themes fundamentally changed the discourse of political Islam in Iran, developing the revolutionary consciousness there throughout the 1960s and 1970s.114

After a period of more than a decade of “disaffected calm,”115 the protests against the shah’s rule restarted in late 1977 and quickly intensified. Despite much suppression and
bloodshed, the shah was unable to stop the tidal waves of revolution. He was forced to leave the country in January 1979. Soon afterward, Khomeini made a triumphant return to Iran, removed the remnants of the Pahlavi rule and began founding what was to be called the Islamic Republic of Iran, in the process sidelining the other social and political forces which had helped bring about the fall of the Pahlavi rule.

ISLAM’S LEGAL ENSHRINEMENT

The establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979 brought a swift end to 2,000 tumultuous years of monarchic rule. The secularist Pahlavi regime was replaced with an Islamic Republic founded on a specific and rigid interpretation of Shi’ite Islam that defines the state to the detriment of other religions in both law and practice. Islam is institutionalized in Article 12 of the Islamic Republic’s Constitution, which declares that the “official religion of Iran is Islam and the Twelver Ja’fari school, and this principle will remain eternally immutable.”

Setting Iran apart from other states with similar features is the conceptualization of the Iranian state as the institutional instrument of the divine will, tethering clerical authority and divine truth together in service of the state. The Islamic Republic of Iran is founded on the principle of “Welayat-e-Faqih,” or “spiritual leadership,” which posits Islamic law as the sole source of legitimacy and political authority. The “spiritual leader” is established as the depository and unique interpreter of that law, while controlling the judiciary, the army, the police, radio and television, as well as the president and the legislature.

Article 91 of the Constitution establishes a “Guardian Council,” which is composed of six clerics appointed by the spiritual leader and six jurists elected by the legislature from among the nominees presented by the head of the judiciary—himself a spiritual leader appointee. The Guardian Council is vested with the authority to examine all laws for their compatibility with the Constitution and Islam. It may veto any law passed by the legislature. Thus, the spiritual leader wields nearly unchecked power in the political system.

NON-SHI’ITE MUSLIMS STIFLED

Article 12 of the Constitution pronounces that “other Islamic schools are to be accorded full respect, and their followers are free to act in accordance with their own jurisprudence in performing their religious rites.” The government’s practice, however, diverges greatly from these principles. Sunni Muslims, who constitute over ten percent of Iran’s population, are denied the right to build mosques in Tehran and other major cities and face Iranian laws that work “against religious minorities, including Sunni Muslims, in employment and education.” The UN notes that “Sunnis …are also prevented from offering prayers in congregation, especially Eid and Friday prayers.” It also voiced concern over reports that officials had been demanding “written oaths from Sunni scholars in Tehran” not to
offer Eid al-Fitr prayers and noted that on one occasion the security forces raided a Sunni house of worship, detained its prayer leader, and locked the building.\textsuperscript{118}

Other Muslim sects are also subject to repression. Members of Sufi sects grapple with arbitrary detention. Security forces detained “several members of Iran’s largest Sufi sect, the Shiite Nematollahi Gonabadi order, and attacked their houses of worship.”\textsuperscript{119} International observers cite Iran for subsequent detentions and floggings of arrested members of this Sufi sect.\textsuperscript{120} The UN reports that “authorities sentenced Gholam-Abbas Zare-Haqiqi, a Gonabadi leader, to four years in prison in October 2009, for allowing a burial at Sufi cemeteries, a banned practice,” and that in April 2011 “they arrested eight Gonabadi dervishes … mainly for assembling in front of the Gonabad Justice Department and prison to protest the detainment of a leader of the order.”\textsuperscript{121}

**NON-MUSLIMS SEVERELY REPRESSED**

Of the non-Muslim minority groups, Baha’is have been the most severely persecuted over the past several decades. Iran is party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), but its Constitution fails to recognize adherents of the Baha’i faith, Iran’s largest non-Muslim religious minority.

Article 13 of Iran’s Constitution declares that “Zoroastrian, Jewish, and Christian Iranians are the only recognized religious minorities, who, within the limits of the law, are free to perform their religious rites and ceremonies and to act according to their own canon in matters of personal affairs and religious education.” Thus, Baha’is “are not allowed, even in theory, to exercise freely their religion and to exist and function as an organized religious community.”\textsuperscript{122}

Numerous Baha’is have “been imprisoned and executed since 1979…they have also been subject to intimidation and arrest, and to forced conversion…[and] having banned them from attending university as Baha’is, agents of the regime subsequently attacked those who had set up and participated in Baha’i study circles.”\textsuperscript{123} In August 2010, the Iranian judiciary sentenced seven leaders of the national Baha’i organization to 20 years each in prison (reduced to 10 years on appeal) on charges of espionage, but without providing evidence and denying them the right to due process.\textsuperscript{124} The UN reports that Baha’is “have historically suffered multifaceted discrimination, including denial of jobs, pensions and educational opportunities, as well as confiscation and destruction of property” and that “at least 100 members of the Baha’i community, including seven community leaders, are currently imprisoned in the Islamic Republic of Iran.”\textsuperscript{125}

The UN also lambasts Iran’s treatment of Christians, whose persecution is a persistent threat “particularly…[for] Protestant Christians, most of whom are newly converted.”\textsuperscript{126} Christian converts have been subject to harassment, detention and harsh convictions, including the death penalty. One Iranian pastor was arrested in 2009 on charges of
apostasy and sentenced to death by a provincial court. The Supreme Court returned the case to the provincial court for re-examination. According to Amnesty International, apostasy “is not defined as a crime in the Iranian Penal Code, but individuals are occasionally convicted of this ‘offense’ on the basis of religious works or edicts by senior Islamic clerics, in accordance with Article 167 of the Constitution which requires judges to use their knowledge of Islamic law to try cases where no codified law exists.”127 Another pastor was detained in June 2010 and held incommunicado in solitary confinement for approximately two months. Iranian authorities dropped the original charge of apostasy against him and have instead charged him with blasphemy. The pastor is now awaiting trial under the new charge.128

**SUNNI EXTREMIST BACKLASH**

The treatment of Sunni Muslims in Iran accounts, at least partially, for the emergence of an extremist violent group known as Jundullah, which in recent years has been involved in terror attacks against both military and civilian targets in Iran between 2005 and 2010. Having emerged around 2003, Jundullah, also known as the People’s Resistance Movement of Iran (PRMI), has claimed responsibility for around a dozen high-profile attacks, including suicide bombings and kidnappings. These include three suicide bombings in 2009 and 2010 in Southeast Iran that targeted religious gatherings of Shi’ite Muslims and left scores dead and many more injured. Jundullah’s former leader, Abdulmalek Rigi, who was arrested and executed in 2010, stated in an interview with the Al-Arabiya television that “the only thing we ask of the Iranian government is to be citizens. We want to have the same rights as the Iranian Shi’ite people. That’s it.”129 The Iranian authorities dismiss the group’s grievances by claiming that Jundullah is a proxy used by the enemies of Iran, chiefly the United States and Israel, to destabilize the country.

**A BLEAK FUTURE FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM?**

Iranians have dealt with restrictions on their civil liberties for decades, from the time of the Pahlavi dynasty under Reza Shah and Mohamed Reza Shah to the 1979 Revolution. Although the former was secularist, and the Islamic Republic theocratic Shi’ite, in both cases those with alternative religious views were subject to state persecution.

Modern day Iran co-opts much of the clergy and brushes off criticism as “un-Islamic,” ensuring that their monopoly on religion endures. Yet, cracks are starting to show, as evidenced most recently by the Green Revolution protests of 2009 in which hundreds of thousands of people rallied against rigged presidential elections. As had occurred under the Shah’s modernization policies, everyday Iranians—especially those of alternative religious views—are reacting to repression with protests, demands for reform, and sometimes reactive violence.
See page 8 of this text’s introduction for further information about this pathway.


Ibid.


Ibid.

Ibid.


Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Afkhami, 2009.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.


For further reading see Kastavi, History of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 2006.

Afkhami, 2009.

For further reading on the role and influence of Shariati see Algar, Roots of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, 2001; Chatterjee, Ali Shariati and the Shaping of Political Islam in Iran, 2011.

Graham, 1980.


Ibid.


Ibid.


“Abdolmalek Rigi, Leader of Iranian Jundallah, has been Captured by Islamic terrorists,” 2010.
Mexico is a Christian-majority country exhibiting the repression-reaction pathway. Restrictions on religious freedom led to the radicalization of religious groups and violent conflict, with ramifications that persist to the present day. Early twentieth-century religion-state relations in Mexico were fraught with tension, resulting in part from the Catholic Church’s ties to political elites and the 1910 revolution that swept those elites from power. Revolutionary leaders responded to the Church’s religious monopoly by imposing increasingly harsh restrictions on Church activities and public worship, triggering the bloody Cristero Rebellion in which Catholic groups fought against the state. Although religion-state conflicts at this level did not recur in the latter half of the twentieth century, the state’s contentious attitude towards the Catholic Church contributed to other problems, such as ongoing sectarian tension between Catholics and Protestants.

**CHURCH-STATE COLLABORATION AND REVOLUTION**

Mexico had a history of close ties between religion and the state before the 1910 revolution. Catholicism was the dominant faith in the country, and the Catholic Church’s connections with colonial and post-colonial governments conveyed both political and economic power to the Church. When a revolutionary movement overthrew the dictator Porfirio Díaz in 1910, anticlerical grievances emerged alongside economic and political ones. The new government placed numerous restrictions on religious activity in the country.

Anger over the inequitable distribution of resources and lack of political openness led to the 1910 Revolution, which was accompanied by strong anticlerical sentiment among revolutionary forces. Porfirio Díaz, an autocratic ruler who had been in power since 1876, had grown increasingly unpopular. The revolution included numerous disaffected elements of Mexican society, including liberal reformers, working class activists, and some businessmen. While much of the revolutionary fervor was directed against large landowners, foreign capital, and the political elite surrounding Díaz, the Catholic Church was also associated with autocratic rule in the minds of the reformers.
Following the revolution, the new Mexican government implemented policies to restrict Catholic activity in the country. The 1917 Constitution replaced the dominant Catholic education system with a secular one, limited the ability of priests to participate in politics or vote, and restricted public worship and religious ownership of property. The revolutionary leaders were initially unwilling to take on the pervasive Catholic sentiment in the country, however, and postponed actively enforcing these restrictions.

POST-REVOLUTIONARY RELIGIOUS REPRESSION AND RADICALISM

Gradually Mexico’s revolutionary governments increased repression of the Catholic Church. The process culminated in the regime of Plutarco Elias Calles in the 1920s. Calles intensified state actions against the Church, provoking the Cristero Rebellion, in which Catholic groups fought against the state. The uprising resulted in severe violence by both sides, and ended in a truce through the help of the US ambassador to Mexico. Restrictions on religious practices continued, however, and tensions continued through the 1930s.

Although repression of the Catholic Church was less severe in the years immediately following the revolution, it increased greatly in the mid-1920s. In 1924 Plutarco Elias Calles began a campaign of intensified state restrictions on the Church. He began strict enforcement of the anticlerical elements in the 1917 Constitution, especially the institution of secular education. In 1926 he intensified the anticlerical restrictions of the Constitution, adding fines for priests wearing religious dress or speaking out against the government. Dissenting priests were hunted down and executed.

Increasing state restrictions fed widespread opposition among Catholics, eventually resulting in the uprising known as the “Cristero Rebellion.” In protest against Calles’ actions, the Catholic Church stopped holding religious services and organized an economic boycott throughout the country. Violence soon broke out between Catholic groups and the army. Catholics organized themselves into a combat force and began active combat against the state, declaring war in January 1927. Fighting spread throughout the country, with the rebels winning several victories against the state and seizing some territory. Over the next two years intense fighting in Mexico resulted in tens of thousands of deaths.

After the conflict ended tensions between Church and state continued. Throughout the conflict, the US ambassador to Mexico attempted to mediate between the combatants and succeeded in establishing a truce by 1929. The underlying conflict between religion and the state, however—as well as the government restrictions on Catholic activity—remained. A second more limited rebellion broke out in 1931 and the Mexican government increased its attempts to replace religious education
Continued state actions against the Catholic Church led to popular opposition as well as international attention, with Catholic groups and some politicians in the United States publicly criticizing the Mexican government’s actions despite US officials’ strategic concerns about supporting Catholic forces who might hinder the states’ bilateral relationship or American oil access.  

**CONTINUING PROBLEMS**

Although conflict on the scale of the Mexican revolution or the Cristero Rebellion did not occur again, both political problems and restrictions on religious freedom persisted in the country. Sectarian tension between Catholics and Protestants arose in rural areas of Mexico, which converged with economic underdevelopment and indigenous struggles to produce several episodes of conflict. While this is not a direct result of earlier problems—like the Cristero Rebellion—the Mexican government’s restrictive stance towards religious freedom following the revolution set the stage for these contemporary problems.

Religious tensions persisted in the form of sectarian violence in rural areas of Mexico. The spread of Protestantism in Mexico following World War Two through foreign missionary activities led to tensions between Catholics and Protestants by the 1960s. Local Catholic officials and laymen pressured Protestants to participate in and contribute to community religious festivals that went against their religious convictions. Local government officials added to the problem by penalizing Protestants for not taking part in the activities. The Mexican state also inflamed anti-Protestant sentiment by claiming that missionary activities were part of US efforts to undermine Mexican culture.

The combination of sectarian tensions, government neglect of religious groups’ concerns, and underdevelopment in rural areas led to outbreaks of violence. At times sectarian tensions resulted in severe violence, such as in 1974 in Chiapas, when Catholics killed hundreds of Protestants and forced tens of thousands to flee the area. Such tensions in Chiapas are accompanied by broader societal problems. Areas like the Chiapas region have historically experienced lower levels of economic development than other parts of the country, and struggles for autonomy on the part of indigenous groups have led to friction between these communities and the federal government. In the 1994 Zapatista uprising indigenous groups fought against the Mexican government. While the sectarian tensions in the region are not caused by these socioeconomic conditions, economic underdevelopment and neglect by the central government likely inflamed Catholic grievances against Protestants, contributing to the violence. Likewise, the sense of grievance and social disruptions accompanying Protestant-Catholic tensions undoubtedly intensified more general concerns on the part of Chiapas residents, playing a part in conflicts like the Zapatista uprising.
Religious tensions continue to the present, and conflicts between Protestants and Catholics still occur in some areas of Mexico. There have been several reports of local governments taking action—including fines, imprisonment, and cutting off of public services—against Protestants for not participating in religious ceremonies. In one case, an individual was temporarily jailed after converting to Protestantism. These incidents were often instigated or accompanied by actions taken by Catholic communities.

While these Catholic-Protestant tensions were not directly caused by the Mexican state’s anti-religious policies following the revolution, they are arguably a legacy of the country’s lack of religious freedom. Restrictions on Catholic religious activities by the government contributed to Catholic grievances and intensified their determination to defend against threats to their culture, including Protestantism. Additionally, the government’s dismissive approach to religious freedom provided few protections to Protestants facing repression at the hands of Catholics or government authorities.

130 See page 8 in this text’s introduction for further information on this pathway.
133 Ibid.
135 Ibid.
141 Bowen, 1996.
143 Ibid.; see also Paul Freston, Evangelicals and Politics in Asia, Africa and Latin America, 2004.
145 For discussion on the connection between the spread of Protestantism and the Zapatista uprising, see Freston, Evangelicals and Politics in Asia, Africa and Latin America, 2004.
147 Ibid.
148 Bowen, 1996.
Despite its promising foundations, massive amounts of US aid, and a vibrant media and civil society, Pakistan remains mired in economic and political crisis. It has minimal protections for religious freedom, with numerous laws and government practices severely restricting religious practice in the country. While the country’s deficit in religious freedom clearly cannot account for all its troubles, that deficit manifestly contributes to violence and instability. According to a 2012 report by the Pew Research Center, Pakistan falls in the “high” category for government restrictions on religion and “very high” category for social hostilities involving religion. 

Pakistan’s current government is not strong enough to take on the militant groups threatening the nation’s security, and the continuing violence by these militant groups limits the government’s ability to increase its capabilities. Expanded religious freedom earlier in the country’s history, which could have stopped disproportionate power from flowing to Islamist groups and minimized sectarian tensions, very likely would have prevented some of the problems Pakistan is currently experiencing.

Pakistan was created as a secular Muslim state in which Islam was quite naturally an important part of political and civil life. However, in response to political challenges from Islamist groups, the government sharply curtailed religious freedom, thereby encouraging increased extremism in the country, which in turn led to further limitations on religious freedom.

Violent religious extremism has increased in Pakistan over the course of its history, partially through the manipulation of religious nationalism and partially through the manipulation of religious actors and ideas by political, military, and intelligence officials. Governments attempted to obtain the support of particular Islamic groups by implementing restrictions on religious practice in the country, which spawned sectarian violence by empowering extremist groups, as described in the state sponsorship pathway. Government manipulation of religion also increased the prominence of extremist Islamist groups in the country—despite their consistently poor showing in elections—and limited political leaders’ ability to operate without appealing to extremist Islam. As described in the insulation pathway, these limitations further empowered Islamist groups, increased the military’s ties to Islam, and restricted debate over cultural issues. The last decade has also witnessed distressing levels of violent extremism, as 60 years of support for militant groups by the military and intelligence services, political stoking of sectarian tensions, and legitimation of extremist views on religion through government policies led to severe outbursts of violence throughout the country.
Early in Pakistan’s history, the country’s elite was preoccupied with ensuring Pakistan’s security and developing a unifying national identity. This led to close ties between the state and extremist versions of Islam, despite Pakistan’s initially secular character. As a result, Pakistani institutions were altered to increase the role of Islam in Pakistani politics and empower extremist Islamist groups. This dynamic contributed to societal tensions, which flared up periodically in the first two decades of the country’s existence.

Pakistan arose out of Muslim nationalism in British-controlled India. Muhammad Ali Jinnah—the founder of Pakistan—envisioned the new country as a homeland for Muslims, but one with a non-religious character that would be welcoming to religious minorities. Despite this secular focus, however, Islam was an important part of Pakistani society. Because there were significant class and ethnic divisions among the citizens of the new country, religion played a major role in the task of unifying Pakistanis.

The military was a significant driver of the increasingly close ties between Islam and the Pakistani state. During military rule from 1958 to 1971, Ayub Khan and Yahya Khan increasingly drew on Islam to strengthen Pakistani institutions and unity. This growing connection between Pakistani military operations and Islam became evident in the East Pakistan political crisis in the late 1960s, which resulted in a savage war and the formation of Bangladesh. During the fighting, Khan justified his repression of Bangladeshi nationalism in part by calling for Pakistani unity through Islam and reaching out to Islamist groups to support his fight against the nationalists.

Islamist groups in Pakistan also pushed for an increasing role for their versions of Islam in the political process. Despite their perennial lack of electoral appeal, extremist Islamist groups became very powerful in Pakistani politics, and had a significant impact on early laws concerning the relationship between religion and the state. This occurred partly through elite manipulation of the political process, as various politicians appealed to Islam to gain public support and hide ethnic divisions among Pakistanis. Also, Pakistani leaders leveraged Islamist groups’ opposition to Communism and concerns over India to gain support for the country’s strategic ties with the United States. The most prominent of these groups was Maulana Maududi’s Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), which predated Pakistan but began operating as an Islamist political party after the partition from India. JI operated primarily as part of the democratic process but harbored extremist ideas and continually challenged the secular nature of the Pakistani state.

The ties between Islam and the state that developed in Pakistan resulted in significant changes to the country’s political system. In 1949, Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan advanced the Objectives Resolution in the legislature, which set standards for ruling the country. The Objectives Resolution emphasized the sovereignty of Allah and called for Pakistani politics to be conducted in line with Islam. However, it also called
The relationship between extremist versions of Islam and the Pakistani state contributed to outbursts of violent extremism. One example is the anti-Ahmadi riots in 1953. Even though Ahmadis had long been active in Pakistani politics, JI viewed the schismatic Muslim sect as non-Muslim. Empowered by their importance in the political system and legitimated through the state’s official ties to Islam, JI began agitating against the Ahmadis. They were joined by other political groups in the early 1950s calling for the removal of the Ahmadi Zafarulla Khan from the post of foreign minister. Anti-Ahmadi fervor led to riots in Lahore and the deaths of 200 Ahmadis. Political disruptions in the late 1960s also involved violent clashes between Islamists and leftists. In the war in East Pakistan, the military government organized Islamist militias to fight against the pro-autonomy Bangladeshi forces, exacerbating the violence in the region.

A DOWNWARD SPIRAL

The connections between extremist Islam and the Pakistani state, and the cycle of violence that emerged early in Pakistan’s history, increased extremist Islam’s role in the country’s politics and narrowed the space for debate on political, cultural, and religious issues. The socialist leader Zulfikar Ali Bhutto adopted numerous policies in response to the strength of Islamist groups, while the military ruler that overthrew him enacted an active Islamization program. These policies further empowered extremist Islamist groups and stoked sectarian tensions, increasing political violence in the country.

Pakistan returned to civilian rule under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, but despite his socialist platform he felt compelled to appeal to Islam in an attempt to gain the support of Islamist groups. He promoted “Islamic socialism” and adopted several extreme policies to gain the support of Islamists and the military, such as officially declaring Ahmadis non-Muslims. This pattern continued under Zia ul-Haq, the army chief of staff who overthrew Bhutto in 1977 and had him executed. Zia implemented several Islamist policies, including the compulsory collection of zakat, the strengthening of existing anti-blasphemy laws, and a law instituting hudood punishments. He also gave JI some official powers, and encouraged the expansion of Islamist influence over the courts and the education system. He increased the role of Islamism in Pakistan’s military, changing training and doctrine to reflect Islam’s superiority. Most importantly, Zia supported the anti-Soviet mujahadeen in Afghanistan, a policy that increased ties between military and Islamist militants and also empowered Islamist groups in Pakistan.

The increasing restrictions on religious freedom adopted under Bhutto and Zia corresponded to an increase in violent actions by religious groups. Despite his attempts to win over Islamist groups, Bhutto faced Islamist protests throughout his tenure in office and his lack of support from Islamist groups paved the way for Zia’s coup. The
Islamization programs of Zia strengthened incipient social hostilities in the country.\textsuperscript{168} Zia’s attempt to codify the conservative Hanafi school of Islam in the country’s legal system exacerbated Sunni-Shi’a tensions, and spawned several violent sectarian groups.\textsuperscript{169} Also, his support for Islamist militants in Afghanistan and Kashmir set the stage for later conflict in Pakistan, as some of these groups eventually came to target Pakistan itself.

### EXTREMISM BEGETS EXTREMISM

When Pakistan returned to civilian rule in the 1990s, the restrictions on religious freedom from the Zia era ensured that extremist Islamist forces would remain powerful in Pakistani politics. Neither civilian nor military rulers could break from Zia’s pro-Islamic policies. This corresponded to an increase in violent extremism in the country, culminating in the bloody struggle between the Pakistani government and militant groups and destructive sectarian violence in recent years.

The combination of increasing religious restrictions by the government and empowerment of Islamist groups left extremist Islam with a prominent place in Pakistani politics. Following Zia’s death in 1988, Pakistan entered a period of turbulent civilian rule, in which leadership alternated between Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif. While Bhutto attempted to distance herself from Islamist groups, Sharif reached out to them to gain their support, initiating restrictions on women and attempting to pass a sharia bill in the national legislature.\textsuperscript{170} Meanwhile, the military continued its relationship with Islamist militants in Afghanistan and Kashmir.

This period of civilian rule ended in 2000 with army Chief of Staff Pervez Musharraf’s coup. After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, Musharraf turned against Pakistan’s former client militias in Afghanistan and promised to limit the sway of extremist groups in the country.\textsuperscript{171} Musharraf was hesitant to crack down too intensely on militant Islamist groups, however, because of their strong ties with the military and because of their potential strategic value.\textsuperscript{172} In the 2002 elections, a coalition of Islamist-leaning political parties gained power in the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) and Balochistan, partly through Musharraf’s assistance.\textsuperscript{173} The Islamists implemented some radical religious policies, although they showed signs of moderation before eventually losing control of the NWFP to more secular parties.\textsuperscript{174}

Violent religious extremism in Pakistan continued to increase during this period. Pakistan’s support for militant groups in Afghanistan and Kashmir bled over into violence in Pakistan itself. Musharraf launched military actions against militants along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in response to US pressure, which angered the Taliban and Taliban-allied groups in the region.\textsuperscript{175} These militant groups began fighting the Pakistani government, and managed temporarily to seize control of a significant amount of territory. Several militant groups operating in Kashmir began launching attacks against targets in Pakistan.\textsuperscript{176} According to the Global Terrorism Database, over 1000 of the
deaths attributable to attacks by specific terrorist groups between the mid-1990s until the present were caused by groups formerly tied to the Pakistani military. The conflict with the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan—an Islamist coalition that arose in response to Pakistani military actions in the border region—has led to over 14,000 deaths since 2007.\textsuperscript{177}

Violent religious extremism also increased in this period as a result of the empowerment of Islamist groups, the incorporation of conservative Sunni doctrine into Pakistani law, and continued ties between the military and extremists. During Benazir Bhutto’s rule, Islamist groups vehemently opposed her leadership, calling her Westernized and corrupt.\textsuperscript{178} And in 1995 members of the military with Islamist sentiments launched a failed coup attempt.\textsuperscript{179} Violence also broke out in the interior of Pakistan under Musharraf’s rule, most notably the 2007 uprising and violent standoff between extremists and the government at the Red Mosque in Islamabad. Sectarian violence increased in this period as well, with attacks on both Shi’as and Ahmadis throughout Pakistan.\textsuperscript{180} This religious-related violence has continued until the present, with the assassinations of Punjab Governor Salman Taseer and Minorities Minister Shahbaz Bhatti in 2011 over their criticism of the country’s anti-blasphemy laws.
The break-up of the Soviet Union in the 1990s led to a political opening that enabled long-suppressed religious freedom to emerge for the first time in decades. One result was an increase in activity among a wide variety of religious groups, which provoked anxiety among Russian Orthodox Church leaders. Fearing that its status and membership would be reduced, the Church allied itself with the government. Its efforts succeeded with the 1997 passage of a religion law that created a hierarchy of religions in which most non-Orthodox faiths are treated as lesser and even deviant entities. Orthodoxy has since then been treated by elites as a crucial component of Russian history, statehood and identity—an example of the state-sponsorship pathway in which one religion’s elevation generates, encourages, or legitimizes state or societal discrimination against minority religions.181

Today an atmosphere of suspicion toward other faith traditions pervades Russian society, government and media. A gratuitously difficult bureaucracy constitutes Russia’s most common vehicle of religious discrimination, often in the form of complex registration processes that prevent religious minorities from worshiping freely, let alone expressing their religious views in public. With the notable exceptions of Chechnya and Dagestan, state-sponsored violence is rare. However, reports indicate instances of law enforcement officials’ complicity in attacks against minority houses of worship.

As in Saudi Arabia, though to a less extreme degree, institutionalized state support for a chosen religion not only contributes to intolerance and strife in the country but can also provoke reactive violence on the part of disfavored religions. The repression-reaction pathway helps to explain how religious repression contributed to a reaction that assumed the form of violent extremism in secessionist Chechnya and Islamist terrorism in Russia’s largely Muslim Caucasus region, ultimately affecting Moscow itself. The use of violence by Muslim extremists further weakened religious freedom by providing the Russian government a pretext for widening crackdowns on Muslim communities.

Decades of Soviet rule included a strict imposition of atheism as the Communist party controlled or quashed any organizations or beliefs that might challenge the state or
Religious communities were regularly targeted for displacement and deportation. For example, Soviet police forcibly expelled nearly 200,000 Tatar Muslims from their homes in Crimea in 1944 and relocated them to remote regions of Siberia where many were forced into the gulag system. Half a million Muslim Chechens and members of other Caucasus groups were forcibly removed from their homes and sent to Kazakhstan and Siberia, a quarter of whom died on the journey. Jews fell victim to periodic displays of Soviet anti-Semitism in which Zionism was denounced as bourgeois nationalism. Stalin oversaw the execution of thirteen prominent Yiddish authors and other cultural leaders on the infamous Night of the Murdered Poets in August 1952. Anti-Semitic propaganda laid the groundwork for the so-called Doctors’ Plot in 1953, in which dozens of Jewish doctors were imprisoned in Moscow under false claims that they were conspiring against the state.

In 1943 Stalin reinstated the Orthodox Church in an effort to bolster Russian nationalism during World War Two. But the Soviet regime was largely successful in gradually and systematically removing religion from public spaces and from public consciousness. Orthodoxy continued to be manipulated as a tool of the communist state, while other religions—especially Islam, Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, and Judaism—were treated as suspect and disloyal. Those who retained religious inclinations were forced to practice secretly and often illegally, with fear of state retribution if caught.

### RELIGION RE-EMERGES

During the initial opening of the political system under Mikhail Gorbachev’s 1980s glasnost policies, religious expression began to emerge once again in Russia. It surged when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, creating a moral and spiritual vacuum across Russian society that religion began to fill. Russian Orthodoxy gained in popularity. Both the Russian government and the international community were surprised at how strongly and quickly religion rebounded when permitted to do so. More than twenty percent of Russia’s population belongs to one of approximately 160 non-Russian ethnic groups. These people have religious traditions ranging from Catholicism to Shamanism and Buddhism. Most had high hopes that their respective religions would also flourish in the post-Soviet system, especially when the 1990 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations prohibited state intervention in religious matters and abolished the Soviet-era Council of Religious Affairs.
Many minority religious groups throughout the federation built new houses of worship and renovated old ones. They formed community groups, held study sessions, and publicized their beliefs through the media. Ethnic Mongols in the republic of Buryatia embraced their Buddhist roots and re-opened Buddhist datsans in eastern Russia. The lifting of the Soviet-era embargo enabled significantly more Muslims to undertake the hajj pilgrimage to Mecca. Other homegrown groups like Russian Jewry and Catholics gained confidence, and foreign groups began operating openly, including Protestant congregations and Mormon missionaries. Western religious groups like the US-headquartered Baptist Church established outreach and charity programs with their fellow evangelicals in Russia in an attempt to address what they saw as a post-Soviet spiritual vacuum.  

BACKLASH AGAINST RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

The Orthodox Church quickly came to view non-Orthodox groups as rivals. The Catholic Church was met with particular suspicion, as were previously unknown groups like the Jehovah’s Witnesses, who began proselytizing in Russia in the 1990s. Orthodox leaders, long disenfranchised and banned from the public arena, feared a loss of adherents as well as the prospect of a rupture between Russian national identity and the Orthodox Church. Church officials grew more and more vocal in connecting Orthodoxy to Russian nationalism in what some critics decried as outright xenophobia. The Church supported the Kremlin’s move toward authoritarian rule by pushing for amended laws on religious freedom. Pressure to reverse the initial post-Soviet expansion of religious freedom led to the Law on the Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations of 1997 (hereafter the 1997 Law).

The 1997 Law formally declared Russia to be a secular state, but it also codified Orthodox Christianity’s special role in Russian history and culture. The text of the law identified Russian Orthodoxy, along with Buddhism, Islam and Judaism, as “traditional religions,” with Orthodoxy at the top of the hierarchy and the other three traditional religions in the second-tier. An example of the state-sponsorship pathway, this hierarchy excluded other religions, and became the norm in both thought and practice in Russia.

The Orthodox Church soon became Russia’s most trusted institution. Nearly two-thirds of Russians self-identified as Orthodox believers —although today only 15-20 percent of Russians actually practice Orthodoxy—and most citizens approved of the religion’s dominance in their society.

Church leaders used their new power to promote “exclusionary and chauvinistic conceptions of Russian national identity.” They worked with the government to institute new rules so that today’s Russian public schools teach Church doctrine, as do Orthodox chaplains in the Russian military. As it grew in power the Orthodox
Church began clashing with its rivals, most notably the Catholic Church, a body many Russian leaders as well as ordinary Russians distrust as foreign and as a vestige of the adversarial Polish state. When in 2002 Pope John Paul II created a diocesan structure for the Catholic Church in Russia, the reaction was swift and negative. Russia not only denied entry visas to the Pope—who never fulfilled his dream of visiting the new nation—but also to foreign bishops and other Catholic leaders. Several Catholic clergy working in Russia were denied the right of return after leaving the country. The 1997 Law, originally thought to strengthen religious freedom, actually permitted the Orthodox Church to maintain a legal and cultural monopoly and to keep minority religions in a distinctly subordinate role.

### THE 1997 LAW’S EFFECTS ON MINORITY RELIGIONS

While Buddhism, Islam, and Judaism are considered inferior to Orthodoxy, they are acknowledged in the 1997 Law as historical traditions that constitute an important part of Russia’s heritage. Below them in Tier III lie all other religious faiths, including Catholicism, Protestantism, and Shamanism, several of which are under particular scrutiny as foreign imports. The greatest pressure has been applied to those traditions that engage in proselytism, which antagonizes Orthodox Church officials. Both evangelical Protestants and Catholics also frustrate the Kremlin with their emphasis on human rights, democracy, and religious freedom.

Tier II and III groups most often experience difficulty in bureaucratic processes. The 1997 Law established a complicated registration system that distinguishes between “organizations” and “groups.” Only the former enjoys a measure of religious freedom, such as the right to conduct religious rites in hospitals, prisons, children’s and old people’s homes; producing and disseminating religious literature; exempting their clergy from military service; and inviting and hosting foreign citizens in Russia for professional purposes.

These restrictions would be less onerous if every religious group could easily obtain “organization” status. However, to gain that status groups must “either prove 15 years’ existence in its locality or [prove] affiliation to a central [already-recognized] religious organization of the same creed.” The state has been inconsistent and punitive in judging these applications. For example, it denied registration to the True Orthodox parish of St. Elijah in 2003 on the grounds that the fifteen years could only be measured from the time at which the state became formally aware of the parish’s presence. Since it had operated out of members’ homes in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the 15-year requirement was not met, notwithstanding the group’s explanation that they had been forced to meet privately because of Soviet persecution. In short, bureaucratic red tape is used to stall or thwart groups that the government finds undesirable. The 1997 Law’s effect has been to “discriminate against religious dissenters and minority faiths, especially if they are viewed as untraditional or foreign.”
FURTHER STATE SPONSORSHIP OF RELIGIOUS REPRESION

Buddhist, Jewish, and Muslim leaders feel consistent pressure to join with Orthodox officials in their promotion of exclusionary policies in order to shift the burden of scrutiny and marginalization to even smaller minorities. Tier II religions are often compelled to support Orthodox officials in restricting smaller Tier III groups in order to preserve the status of their communities. Tier III groups thus feel particularly isolated and without recourse in the political, national or religious arenas, especially when they face direct persecution. Sporadic instances of violence against minority religious groups have occurred, as when a Baptist church was burned down in 2004. Local authorities threatened, rather than consoled, the congregation. 201 Baptists distributing literature were met by police whose aggressive response included damaging their car and breaking their noses. 202 A 2006 Pentecostal service was interrupted by an inebriated youth who denigrated the worshipers as “demons” for their non-Orthodox celebration of the Easter holiday. 203 These incidents represent a level of hostility to religious minorities that appears to be widespread. One expert identifies “numerous examples of non-Orthodox religious communities being harassed by local officials or assaulted by vandals or both without any intervention by federation authorities.” 204 Police and judicial unwillingness to pursue the perpetrators of these crimes raises serious doubts about the state’s dedication to protect minority religious communities.

Apart from state policy, Russian popular sentiment has seen a worrisome trend toward xenophobia whose most common manifestation is anti-Semitism. Anti-Jewish newspaper articles are permissible in media coverage, and neo-Nazi groups operate freely. Radical members of such groups have carried out terror bombings and were responsible for the 2006 stabbing of Jews worshiping in a Moscow synagogue. 205

HARDSHIPS IN THE MUSLIM-MAJORITY REPUBLICS

Ethnic Russians also remain wary of the country’s Muslims. Russia has only 6,000 mosques to serve its 20 million Muslims, the equivalent of about one mosque for every 3,300 people, while Orthodox churches are ubiquitous even in Muslim-majority areas. 206 The scarcity of houses of worship is just one way in which Muslims are treated as second-class citizens even where they are a numerical majority, such as in Russia’s autonomous Muslim-majority republics of Chechnya and Dagestan. Muslims there are religiously more active than Muslims of the North Caucasus and Volga–Urals, and have proven to be a special challenge to the Russian government and Orthodox leaders. 207 Chechens have engaged in two civil wars against the Russian state in bids to protect their rights and gain independence. The first (1994 to 1996) was largely a case of nationalist separatism whereas the second (ongoing since 1999) has exhibited a more religious tone. 208
Russian President Boris Yeltsin came into office before the outbreak of the first war insisting that he could “not stand idly by while a piece of Russia breaks off.” He proceeded to identify Chechens as “Islamic terrorists—criminals and fanatics... immersed in the totalitarian ideology of global jihad.” His administration played upon Russian nationalism, which had increasingly become associated with Russian ethnicity and Orthodox Christianity, to demonize the Chechen rebels.

Vladimir Putin succeeded Yeltsin with an even more hardline stance, determined to crack down on any whiff of separatism. When leaders of the Islamic International Peacekeeping Brigade (IIPB), an Islamist militia advocating secession and the establishment of an Islamic state, launched an incursion into Chechnya’s neighboring republic of Dagestan in August 1999, Putin’s military pushed them back into Chechnya and launched a counterattack. Putin used the Dagestani invasion and a series of Moscow bombings that may have been orchestrated by Russian security forces as a pretext for a full-scale invasion of Chechnya—even though Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov and his administration had condemned the IIPB and sought Moscow’s help to deal with Muslim extremists. Moscow ignored such requests even after the infamous 2004 Beslan school siege in which over 350 people died, many of them children, when Russian forces stormed a school three days after Chechen rebels took the building with more than 1100 hostages inside.

Russia’s scorched earth policy during the second war did not dissuade frustrated Chechens from mounting an ongoing insurgency that had a more religious edge than the first Chechen War. Rebels now fought for the dual goals of Islamism and separation from Russia. Faced with the clear military superiority of Russian fighters, and with the installation of Akhmad Kadyrov as Moscow’s crony in Grozny, Chechen fighters increasingly turned to terror tactics, mounting periodic surprise attacks on civilians and state institutions throughout Russia.

Such a vicious cycle—in which state repression encourages rebel violence, which in turn begets more systematic state violence—shows no sign of abating in the republics of the southern Caucasus. Muslims’ grievances continue to grow, but “the Kremlin has not acknowledged that the Chechen separatists have a legitimate cause.” An example of the repression-reaction pathway, the repression of Muslims’ religious freedom has encouraged reactive violence. Muslim separatists may continue to take up arms until the repression, including the religious repression, abates.

**EQUATING ISLAM WITH RADICALISM**

The Russian state’s proclivity for heavy-handed security measures only intensified following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, when the American-led Global War on Terror offered Moscow additional encouragement to frame its security measures as counterterrorism. The global expansion of Islamist extremism in recent years has
drawn attention to the more than 14 million Muslims in Russia—who constitute Europe’s largest Muslim population—and the risk that they may be radicalized. Despite this risk, Russian authorities have responded to instances of legitimate and peaceful Muslim resistance as if they necessarily threatened Russian society, feeding a cycle of distrust and alienation. Some Muslim congregations refuse to register with the state as a matter of principle and continue to operate illicitly. Some of these groups accuse registered Muslim congregations of succumbing to state control and thereby relinquishing religious authenticity. Unregistered Muslim groups face harsh crackdowns that only push them further from state control and indeed radicalize some believers.

As in Chechnya and Dagestan, Russian officials justify increasingly harsh policies as the only way to thwart extremism and terrorism. A 2002 counter-extremism law has been “exploited by the authorities to persecute religious minorities, intimidate the media and clamp down on opposition activists.” Under this law some Islamic books are banned, making peaceful Muslims vulnerable to police action. Followers of Salafism face regular harassment. Other groups are also subject to the arbitrary application of the law. A leader in the Jehovah’s Witnesses, for example, was charged with “inciting religious hatred” for dispensing religious materials in Siberia in late 2010. Such “counterterrorism” activities show strong signs of being counterproductive, fostering the religious extremism they are ostensibly intended to contain.

THE ONGOING ABSENCE OF PLURALISM

Not every official at the national or regional level endorses Orthodoxy’s state institutionalization. Some public figures feel strongly enough to speak out. Ten well-known Russian scientists issued a joint statement to President Putin decrying what they called the “growing clericalization” of Russian society. Yet calls for religious freedom have largely fallen on deaf ears. Both the Russian government and the Orthodox Church tend to resist changes that might disrupt their mutually advantageous relationship.

Russia’s lack of religious freedom is all the more problematic because of the immense religious diversity within its borders. At least one-fifth of Russians belong to groups other than the Orthodox Church. If Russia’s array of religious traditions were permitted to operate freely and equally, the country would likely become more stable as well as more just. Equally important, the threat of violent religious extremism in Russian society would likely diminish significantly.

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181 See page 8 in this text’s introduction for more information on this pathway.
182 Steinberg and Wanner, 2008, page 1.
Religious Freedom and Violent Religious Extremism

186 Balzer, 2009, introduction xi.
188 Ibid., page 285.
189 See page 9 in this text's introduction for more information on this pathway.
194 Ibid.
199 Ibid., page 49.
203 Ibid., page 307.
210 Ibid., page 163.
211 “Beslan Mourns Deadly School Siege,” 2009.
213 See page 9 in this text's introduction for further information on this pathway.
215 “Global Christianity,” 2011.
Since its founding, Saudi Arabia has been marked by the utter absence of religious freedom. When tribal forces allied with conservative Islamic scholars took advantage of the Ottoman Empire’s decline and seized the holiest sites of Islam, the Kingdom was founded on conservative Islamic principles that proscribed any religious activity—Islamic or otherwise—that did not conform. The combination of an intolerant religious atmosphere and Saudi government actions to ensure its rule has led to outbursts of violence in the country—examples of the state-sponsorship pathway and the outbidding pathway. Both helped spawn the organization Al-Qaeda and its transnational terrorist activities.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was officially founded in 1932, although the union between the Saudi tribal family and conservative Wahhabi clerics can be traced back to the late eighteenth century. The kingdom is officially an Islamic state, and the Wahabbi brand of Islam suffuses all elements of society. As a result, Saudis enjoy few political rights and little religious freedom. Wahhabi interpretations of Islam have also influenced the country’s foreign policy, including the Kingdom’s support for extremist religious causes around the world.

Saudi Arabia emerged from an alliance between the al-Saud tribal family and the Wahhabis, an ultra-conservative school of Islam. In the late eighteenth century, Muhammad bin Saud joined forces with Muhammad ibn abd-al Wahhab, a conservative cleric. Together they seized a significant amount of territory in the Arabian Peninsula before being beaten back by Ottoman forces. When the Ottoman Empire disappeared after World War One, the Saudis took over the peninsula, eventually claiming control of what is now Saudi Arabia. Islam—specifically the ultra-conservative form adopted by the Saudi royal family—has played a crucial role in the state’s functioning since its founding. The kingdom’s legal system is based on the Qur’an—specifically the conservative interpretation of Qur’anic teachings advanced by the Wahhabis. Accordingly, the Ulama, or religious scholars, have a great amount of legal authority, with power over legal issues and education. Furthermore, the Saudi monarchy rules on the basis of its defense of Islam and guardianship of
Mecca and Medina. The king has adopted the title of “Defender of the Two Holy Places.”

One effect of the relationship between the king and the ultra-conservative form of Wahhabi Islam is the repressive nature of the Saudi state, which allows no democratic expression or religious freedom. The political system is run by the king and a vast network of princes, with little room for input from the Saudi people. Despite some reforms in recent decades, the autocratic nature of Saudi politics has persisted. The monarchy ruthlessly represses any dissent, whether it arises from Islamists, liberal reformers or the country’s Shi’a minority, and the kingdom severely restricts religious expression, with religious police forces imposing Wahhabi principles on all citizens.

Another effect of the state’s extremist nature is Saudi sponsorship of Islamist causes around the world. In part because of security threats from Soviet proxies like Egypt and in part because of the anti-religious nature of Soviet Communism, Saudi Arabia supported the United States during the Cold War. Beginning in the 1970s, this involved active support for anti-Communist forces around the world, as well as the spread of Wahhabi teachings beyond the Kingdom. These two combined with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, when Saudi Arabia worked with the United States to funnel arms and supplies to anti-Soviet fighters in that country. Saudi Arabia also supported the flow of Arab fighters—many of whom were inspired by extremist preachers—to the Afghan conflict.

**PRAGMATIC POLICIES AND RELIGIOUS PUSHBACK**

Saudi Arabia’s precarious security situation—which persisted in one form or another for decades after World War Two—led the kingdom to adopt several policies that upset the Wahhabi religious establishment. One was its close relationship with the United States, which involved both economic and military cooperation. Another was the set of economic development programs undertaken by the monarchy beginning in the 1960s. Most controversially, the Saudis allowed US troops to be stationed in the Kingdom in the early 1990s in response to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait.

Saudi Arabia has maintained close economic and security ties with the United States since its founding. The Saudis gave a US company oil exploration rights in the 1930s, and a close economic relationship developed after oil was discovered. The two began cooperating on military issues during World War II, when the United States approached Saudi Arabia about establishing an air base in the country. After the war ended, the Soviet threat and the US interest in maintaining a presence in the region led to continued military cooperation. The United States ensured Saudi security in exchange for Saudi stabilization of oil supplies and cooperation on US initiatives, including the Israel-Arab dispute. Close cooperation with a non-Islamic state led to periodic opposition from voices in Saudi Arabia, but the relationship nonetheless
remained close.224

Beginning in the 1960s, the kingdom also instituted several programs of economic development. The monarchy introduced television into the country in the 1960s, to the anger of some conservatives. This accelerated with the oil boom of the 1970s, when the kingdom undertook numerous construction and development projects. It has continued with numerous reforms initiated by current King Abdullah, including the aforementioned local elections. Several National Dialogues have been conducted to promote understanding on religious extremism and women’s issues. Educational reform was designed to limit the influence of Wahabbi doctrine and a new science and technology university was modeled on Western centers of learning.225 These initiatives have upset traditional tribal and religious cultural norms, leading to anger from some elements of society.226

Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990 resulted in a US troop presence in the kingdom at the Saudis’ request. Saudi Arabia had supported Iraq during the 1980s’ Iran-Iraq war because of the kingdom’s rivalry with Iran. When Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, however, the Saudis saw the Iraqi move as a threat to their security and attempted to mobilize regional and international action to repel the Iraqis. The kingdom accepted the US offer to provide support, which involved stationing US troops in the country. Even though the Saudis received a fatwa from the Ulama legitimating the action, it still provoked significant anger from segments of Saudi society.227

**VIOLENT EXTREMISM AT HOME AND ABROAD**

The combination of a restrictive domestic religious atmosphere and state actions to counter conservative religious standards has contributed to violent extremism at home and abroad. This dynamic emerged early in Saudi history, when zealous followers of the Saudi regime turned into opponents after the Saudi ruler made a peace agreement with the British. Subsequently, there have been several attacks in the country—both against the government and against civilians—in response to what the attackers saw as a failure to follow religious norms. Saudi tolerance for extremist preaching in the country and support for anti-Soviet fighters in Afghanistan also contributed to the rise of the Al-Qaeda movement, which launched destructive attacks around the world and eventually in Saudi Arabia itself through its subsidiary of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

One outburst of violent extremism occurred early in the country’s history, with the Ikhwan revolt. The Ikhwan were tribal Wahhabi fighters under the Saudi king, who were inspired by their Islamic convictions to fight ferociously against Saudi enemies. After the king consolidated his position, however, he called for a halt to Ikhwan raids against British held Transjordan. This angered the Ikhwan, who saw it as weakness on the part of the king and an unwillingness to act on their shared Islamic convictions. They subsequently launched a revolt against the Saudis, although they were quickly
Religious freedom and violent religious extremism

Recurrent anger at perceived hypocrisy by the Saudi royal house—especially in their policies of economic development and ties with the United States—led to occasional extremist violence in the country. Saudi attempts to transform the tribal structure of the Kingdom, and its interactions with the United States, have led religious conservatives to accuse the regime of forsaking its Islamic responsibilities. One incident occurred in 1966, when a nephew of King Faisal launched an attack on a new television station because he deemed it un-Islamic. The attack was repelled, and Faisal’s nephew was killed by security forces. His brother, however, later assassinated Faisal in 1975. Another outburst of violent extremism came in 1979 when armed extremists took control of the Grand Mosque in Mecca during the hajj and declared their leader the Mahdi. The extremists hoped to establish a theocracy. The resultant siege led to the death of hundreds of people, including the attackers, security forces and hostages.

There has also been low-level but persistent violence arising from social actors and government officials enforcing religious norms. For example, in 2006 a group of people raided a theater in which a play on moderation was being performed and attacked audience members. And in 2009, a group of about 100 people attacked inhabitants of a Shi’a community, injuring several before security forces intervened. There have also been many instances of “religious vigilantes” harassing people for violating religious norms, including women’s dress codes.

Another example of violent extremism was the rise of the Al-Qaeda network, which was enabled by Saudi support for the mujaheddin in Afghanistan and Saudi tolerance for extremist preachers. As noted, the Saudis supported anti-Soviet fighters in Afghanistan. It was in this conflict that Osama bin Laden first came to prominence through his efforts to fight the Soviets under the Al-Qaeda umbrella organization. Bin Laden was the son of a prominent Saudi construction magnate, and became radicalized through exposure to extremists operating in Saudi Arabia. After the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan, bin Laden maintained his organization and attempted to deploy it in the service of the Saudis to repel Saddam Hussein when he invaded Kuwait. The Saudis chose to rely on US forces instead, which angered bin Laden and led him—in accordance with the outbidding pathway described in the Introduction—to label the Kingdom apostate and turn against it. He then made contacts with extremist groups around the world and eventually began operations against US and US-allied targets.

Earlier Saudi tolerance for extremism and its indirect role in Al-Qaeda’s emergence also led to violence in the country. Shortly after the US invasion of Iraq, an Al-Qaeda offshoot—Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)—began operating in the Kingdom. The group conducted several extremely violent attacks, including the kidnapping and beheading of American citizens, an attack on a compound.
housing Western workers, attempted attacks on Saudi oil refineries, and assassination attempts against Saudi royalty. Although Saudi military actions disrupted the group’s presence in the country, AQAP relocated to Yemen, from which they have launched attempted attacks against US bound airliners and have contributed to instability in Saudi Arabia’s southern neighbor.236

221 See page 8 in this text’s introduction for further information on this pathway.
222 See page 9 in this text’s introduction for further information on this pathway.
224 Ibid.
226 Ibid.
228 Bronson, 2006.
231 Ibid.
233 Ibid.
234 Ibid.
235 See page 9 in this text’s introduction for further information on this pathway.
Unlike many of the countries highlighted here, Senegal constitutes a positive case, i.e. a country in which provisions for religious freedom and minimal violent extremism demonstrate the operation of both the pluralism pathway and the \textit{inclusion-moderation pathway}. Senegal contains many factors that have led to religious violence in other countries, including a dominant religious tradition, a wide variety of ethnic groups, and a sizable religious minority group. Despite the presence of such factors, the country’s long-running separatist conflict has not resulted in a radicalization of its minority or majority populations, and it has maintained a relatively high level of political stability. Indeed, Senegalese religious ideas and actors are involved in political life, and religious politics are of a moderate and tolerant nature. While numerous factors undoubtedly contributed to the development of a tolerant and liberal society, the ability of religious groups to function freely and independently of the government likely prevented the rise of radical elements that would have generated violent religious extremism in the country.

**RECIPE FOR VIOLENT EXTREMISM?**

Historical and contemporary social factors might well create the expectation that Senegal should be experiencing violent religious extremism. Senegal is a multi-ethnic state that emerged from colonial rule in the last century, a combination of factors that in other countries has contributed to civil war. Islam has played a prominent role in Senegalese politics, a factor that has helped generate radical Islamist movements in other Muslim countries. Moreover, Senegal has a regional ethno-religious divide: a significant Christian population resides in the western and southern parts of the country. Similar religious divides have laid the groundwork for conflict elsewhere.

Like many African countries, Senegal is a multi-ethnic state whose modern borders arose in part through the policies of colonial powers. France took control of Senegal in the mid-1800s and ruled the country until independence in 1960. Post-independence Senegal was composed of several ethnic groups, none of which constituted a majority of the population. Additionally, its early history was marked by failed attempts to unify with neighboring states. Upon independence, Senegal and Mali were joined in a confederation that lasted only a few months, and Senegal later formed a confederation with Gambia that existed from 1982 to 1989.
Senegal is also a majority Muslim state with a history of Islamic involvement in politics. After independence, the country’s Sufi orders became a dominant force in Senegalese politics, wielding significant power over political decisions. In recent years more conservative Islamic groups have become active in Senegal, such as the Islamist Ibadou Rahmane movement, which provides social services and education throughout the country.

Finally, Senegal is home to a significant Catholic minority population. The country is 94 percent Muslim, 5 percent Roman Catholic, and 1 percent animist. Senegal’s Catholic population is concentrated in the western and southern parts of the country, leaving it for the most part geographically separate from the Muslim majority.

**THE DOG THAT DIDN’T BARK**

Despite circumstances that in other nations have combined to generate high levels of violent religious extremism, Senegal has not experienced violent extremism to any significant degree. Potentially extremist Islamist groups operate in Senegal, but they have had less impact on Senegalese politics than the more moderate Sufi orders. A separatist conflict exists in the Christian-dominated southern region, but it has not taken shape as a religious conflict, even though similar circumstances have produced severe religious or ethno-religious conflict in other countries. Most importantly, despite some setbacks, Senegal has managed to maintain a relatively robust democratic civic and political life.

Islamist groups are active in Senegal but have had little influence on Senegalese society. Senegal’s majority religion is marked by what some observers term a “tranquil and moderate Islam” fed by the country’s powerful Sufi orders. The Sufism of Senegal has historically been very tolerant of religious differences and not prone to violence. Islamist groups have struggled to organize themselves successfully and have failed to alter the tolerant quality of religious discourse in the country.

Even though a separatist conflict has been raging for decades in the Christian south, it has not taken on a religious dimension and has not risen to the levels of brutality characteristic of other ethno-religious conflicts. The conflict between the government and the separatist Movement of the Democratic Forces of the largely Catholic Casamance region began in the early 1980s and continued through the 2000s. Fighting has resulted in approximately 1300 deaths over the course of the conflict, although the intensity has declined in recent years and the conflict may be dissipating. Despite its duration and the nation’s ethno-religious divide, the fighting has not radicalized the population or taken on a religious character. Indeed there have been very few instances of religion-related hostility in the country in the past several years.
In sum, notwithstanding its ethno-religious divides, its religiously-influenced politics, and its political violence, Senegal has maintained a relatively stable political system, and relatively high levels of religious freedom, throughout the latter half of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century. Although Senegal had only two presidents between its independence and 2000, an open election was held in 2000. Another presidential election was held in 2007, which helped to strengthen the democratic process in the country.\textsuperscript{243} Despite problematic developments in recent years—the current president has taken steps to consolidate his rule at the expense of political competition—the country’s political system remains relatively open when compared to others in the region.\textsuperscript{244}

**RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND ACCOMMODATION**

While numerous factors underpin Senegal’s relatively successful political system, the status of religious freedom has very likely contributed to it. The post-independence autonomy of religious leaders vis-à-vis the state and the mutual cooperation characterizing their relationship have precluded the kinds of conflicts that have arisen from Islamist activism in other states. The provisions for religious freedom in the country’s legal system have prevented religious grievances from emerging on the part of either the Muslim majority or the Christian and animist minorities. Non-religious political and socioeconomic factors undoubtedly played a large part in averting the rise of violent extremism, but it would be difficult to ignore the role of religious freedom.

There has been a long history of separation, cooperation, and accommodation between the country’s religious and political leaders. Sufi orders in Senegal wield significant influence over society, with a presence in most facets of the economy, culture and politics.\textsuperscript{245} However, the country’s religious groups did not use their power to contest the state for control of society. Senegal’s Sufi orders worked with French authorities in the colonial period, and then established a close relationship with the country’s first president, who was Catholic.\textsuperscript{246} A relationship of mutual dependence has resulted. Political leaders rely on religious orders for support and Sufi orders look to the state for the freedom to operate.\textsuperscript{247} Although increased opposition to Senegal’s ruling elite from the 1980s on put some strain on this relationship, it has for the most part persisted to the present.\textsuperscript{248}

Despite the importance of Islam in Senegalese politics, the state is a secular one, with constitutional provisions for religious freedom for both majority and minority faiths.\textsuperscript{249} There is some government involvement in religion, including its operation of Islamic schools and the voluntary use of Islamic law for marriage and inheritance.\textsuperscript{250} Despite these provisions, state limitations on religious freedom are relatively minimal. Senegal is one of the few Muslim countries that ranks “low” in both government
restrictions on religion and social hostilities toward religion, in the Pew Research Center’s global studies of religious freedom and religious restrictions.251

Other factors besides religious freedom likely contributed to this outcome, but Senegal’s liberal allowance for robust religious participation in civil and political life has undoubtedly played some role in the country’s relative absence of violent religious extremism. Senegal’s officially secular constitution makes it difficult for political elites to manipulate religion for political gain, while the prominence of Senegal’s Sufi order limits the government’s ability to ignore or undermine the country’s religious elements. Finally, the minimal restrictions on religious practice have probably prevented radical elements of the country’s Muslim and Christian communities from dominating discourse. The absence of violence arising from Senegal’s religious groups, and their participation in Senegalese civil and political life very likely helped a relatively liberal democratic political process to emerge.

237 See pages 10 and 11 in this text’s introduction for further information on these pathways.
240 Ibid.
241 Ibid.
242 “Senegal,” n.d.
244 “Senegal,” 2011.
250 Ibid.
In Sri Lanka, overlapping ethnic and religious differences contributed both to restrictions on religious freedom and a violent civil war, an example of the repression-reaction pathway. When the country gained its independence from Great Britain in 1948, the Buddhist Sinhalese majority enshrined Sinhalese nationalism, which was integrally connected to the population's Buddhist beliefs and came to serve as the main national identity. One result was increasing restrictions on the religious and cultural rights of minorities, including the mostly Hindu Tamils. By the 1980s Tamil grievances triggered a civil war encompassing numerous groups who demanded greater autonomy. By the 1990s the most brutal of these groups, the nationalist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), became the dominant fighting force, and the conflict persisted until the early 2000s. A concerted military campaign by the Sri Lankan government soon ended the war, but concerns about Tamil political rights and religious expression persist.

**COLONIAL LEGACIES AND BUDDHIST NATIONALISM**

Like many post-colonial societies, Sri Lanka drew on pre-colonial culture, including religion, to form a national identity after gaining independence. This identity reflected the close ties between the country's majority Sinhalese population and their Buddhist religious beliefs, which contrasted sharply with the large, mostly Hindu Tamil minority. The government’s favoring of Sinhalese Buddhism has been consistent throughout the country’s history, often at the expense of Tamil Hindus, as well as the country’s Muslims and Christians.

The United Kingdom administered Sri Lanka in the first half of the twentieth century. Under colonial rule, the Tamil minority was favored for the first time with political privileges and access to government positions. Soon after independence in 1948, however, a backlash by the Sinhalese majority brought unprecedented repression of Tamil culture. Sri Lanka’s initial post-independence name was Ceylon, a variant of “Sinhala.” Even when it was changed to Sri Lanka, the government adopted the Sinhalese symbol of the lion for the country’s flag. The official monopoly of Sinhalese Buddhism intensified over the next few decades, and a 1956 law established Sinhalese as the country’s official language.
The 1972 Constitution nominally provides for religious freedom but simultaneously gives Buddhism the “foremost place” among the country’s religions. The Ministry of Buddhist Affairs was established in the 1990s to oversee historic sites and manage national cultural affairs. (It also oversees smaller departments for Hindu and Muslim affairs and a directorate that works with the Sri Lankan Christian community.)

Buddhist religious nationalism developed as an element of official policy in the 1950s. Then and now Buddhist monasteries have played a significant role in the day-to-day functioning of communities. Exclusionary policies were passed in response to concerted pressure from Sinhalese religious and political groups. Buddhist monks pressed the government to elevate the status of Buddhism and heavily influenced the transformative 1956 election. Their lobbying skewed the education system to favor members of the Sinhalese ethnic group and encouraged politicians to appeal to Sri Lanka’s religiously infused nationalism as an effective means of winning elections.

TENSIONS BRING CIVIL WAR

The prominence of Sinhalese Buddhism has produced sporadic bouts of violence since independence. Riots broke out in 1956 and 1958 when Tamils protested the privileging of Sinhalese Buddhism as the country’s national religion. In 1959, a Sinhalese nationalist leader was assassinated by an extremist Buddhist monk because of the leader’s attempts at reconciliation and compromise between the country’s religious and ethnic minorities.

By the early 1980s, Tamil frustration erupted into a civil war between these groups and the government. In an example of the repression-reaction pathway, Tamils sought to defend themselves from further violence and establish an identity and territory independent of the repressive regime. In 1983, the LTTE ambushed a Sri Lankan military patrol. Widespread Sinhalese anger over this incident led to brutal anti-Tamil riots and the deaths of hundreds of Tamils. Tamil militant groups soon began fighting the Sri Lankan government and each other. Eventually the LTTE emerged as the strongest Tamil force. Beginning in the 1980s it engaged government forces and also fought a short-lived Indian peacekeeping mission in the early 1990s. The group employed brutal attacks on non-Tamil civilians and pioneered the use of suicide bombings against civilian and military targets. Although officially nationalist, the LTTE’s organization and tactics drew deeply on religious symbols.

The result of the LTTE attacks was wholesale civil war by the early 1980s. The Sinhalase Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) party, a political movement mixing Sri Lankan nationalism and Sinhalese Buddhism, grew powerful and opposed any peace deal with Tamil separatists. They and other Sinhalese nationalists fought Tamils in rural areas and attacked Sinhalese politicians they deemed too conciliatory to
Tamils. These actions continued until the early 1990s when the Sri Lankan army’s brutal suppression rendered the JVP largely inactive.\textsuperscript{265} The war between LTTE forces and the government continued through the early 2000s with casualties numbering 60,000. All the while, Sinhalese-dominated politics continued to squeeze Tamil culture, religion, and economic opportunity out of public life.\textsuperscript{266}

While the civil war officially ended in 2009, the resulting measure of political stability did little to alleviate Sri Lanka’s underlying political and ethno-religious tensions. For one, the government’s total victory over the LTTE entailed widespread humanitarian abuses among the country’s Tamil population. Many Tamils fled their homes and created an enduring refugee population both within Sri Lanka and in neighboring India.

Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa routinely moves against his political opponents, especially those of Tamil origin. General Sarath Fonseka, a former military chief who ran against Majapaksa in the presidential election, was arrested after losing the election. He was charged with plotting a coup, although many believe the charges to be trumped up or even entirely fabricated by those in power.\textsuperscript{267} The government has also been critical of UN attempts to investigate military actions in the final stage of the civil war. Harassment of Christians and Muslims has also increased in recent years.

In fact, religious freedom has significantly deteriorated for non-Tamil minorities. Christians and Muslims experience greater harassment today than they did in wartime. For example, Christian groups have had difficulties registering with the government and securing visas for religious workers. Police have interrupted Christian religious services, and political figures have led mobs in attacks against Christian churches. A Muslim author was arrested for writing a book on her conversion from Buddhism to Islam because authorities deemed the work offensive to Buddhism. The Sri Lankan Parliament has considered criminalizing “unethical” conversions,” the definition of which is ambiguous and would therefore be subject to abuse.\textsuperscript{268}

The Sri Lankan government maintains a tenuous political stability by continuing to support a Sinhalese Buddhist monopoly that marginalizes other groups. In order to avoid the reemergence of violence and political instability, it seems clear that Sri Lanka must find a way to provide religious freedom for its minority citizens and communities.
252 See page 8 in this text’s introduction for further information on this pathway.
257 Seneviratne, 1999.
265 Ibid.
266 Little, 1994.
Turkey is sometimes cited as a Muslim-majority democracy in which modern notions of religious freedom and other civil liberties are enjoyed by most, if not all, of its citizens. Indeed, Turkey’s contemporary political framework enables religious-minded citizens to assert their preferences at the ballot box, in protests, and in civil society. As examples of both the inclusion-moderation and pluralism pathways, these and related allowances of religious freedom work against extremism by incorporating potential Islamic extremists into society and the political system.

Turkey arrived at this status in an unusual manner. Staunch secularism was forcibly instituted in the 1920s Kemalist reforms that established the Turkish republic. Seen as a force for modernization and Westernization, strict secularism was long defended by the Turkish army and its powerful generals. Even during the years of aggressive secularism, Turks rarely encountered state-sponsored persecution or harassment in the private practice of religion.

Nor was religion absent from public life. Turkish society always reflected a Sunni Islamic influence. However, Kemalism co-opted Islam, made it uniform and ensured its institutionalization by the state. The Religious Affairs Department was founded in 1924 as a government apparatus and even today applies an annual budget of nearly one billion USD to programs that serve primarily the majority Sunni population. In that sense, religion in Turkey is not so much separate from the state as molded by it. In making Islam mainstream, these policies discouraged the type of extremism that spawns violence, but they also instituted rigid norms that belie full religious freedom.

Today religious minorities face difficulties both because of the historic state co-optation of religion and because of the policies of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), whose leaders are Islamic. Religious Sunni Muslim Turks, more vocal and politically active than ever before, have given the AKP a commanding parliamentary majority three times. The party’s moves toward constitutional reform have aroused suspicions from staunch secularists who worry that what AKP calls democratization is actually a gradual Islamization of Turkish society. AKP’s policies have unquestionably given Islamic identity a more prominent place in the Turkish republic than ever before.
These factors highlight both challenges and opportunities for religious freedom in Turkey. They implicate the right of Muslim Turks to participate in politics within due limits and the right of non-Muslim minorities to exercise their faith in private and public life. The movement away from strict Kemalist secularism has created opportunities for more religious freedom for Muslims, but may have increased risks for non-Muslims. A significant erosion of religious freedom could change the positive pathways that Turkey currently exhibits and encourage the development of religious extremism.

**INSTITUTION OF SECULARISM**

An aggressive form of state-controlled secularism was a crucial component of founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s modernizing reforms when he founded the Turkish republic in the 1920s. Abolition of the Islamic caliphate was paired with a revocation of Islam as the state religion, although 99 percent of the Turkish population remains at least nominally Muslim. Atatürk’s Turkish nationalism emerged as a primary identity, grounded in common statehood, ethnicity, and reverence for Ataturk. Religious identity for Turks was actively discouraged by the Kemalist state. Schoolchildren, in a practice that continues today, began each day with a nationalist pledge of allegiance that avows loyalty and service to the Turkish nation and to Ataturk himself through the words, “I am a Turk, I am honest, I am hard-working... I offer my existence to the Turkish nation as a gift.” Nationalism became Turkey’s most prized value, and religious garb was discouraged. The “generic” ideology of modernization “succeeded in disestablishing Islam in public life.”

Atatürk eventually institutionalized restrictions on minority religious groups like the Sufis and Orthodox Christians by, for example, closing Dervish lodges. Naqshabandi sect leader Sheikh Said responded by collaborating with Kurdish separatists (primarily the Azadi group) to lead the first large-scale Kurdish uprising in 1925, which pitted 15,000 Kurdish militiamen and volunteer fighters against over 50,000 Turkish troops. The government put down the 1925 rebellion with aerial bombardments and severe restrictions that sparked a massive Sufi relocation to Syria. Secularists claim that the Naqshbandis and other religious minorities fomented dissent against the state in an attempt to prevent Turkey’s progress toward the adoption of European-style legal codes and civil liberties.

Similar, smaller uprisings occurred intermittently and also provoked heavy-handed repression, including lengthy periods of martial law over large areas of southeastern Anatolia. The strict institution of Ataturk’s separation of religion and state persisted for the ensuing decades, earning its proponents the political label “Kemalists.”

The 1925 rebellion offers the first major example of the dangerous nexus between religious repression and violent extremism in Turkey. As described in the repression-
Religious freedom and violent religious extremism resulted from the religious and cultural oppression of Naqshabandis and Kurds. This sparked violent extremism that resulted in a secessionist struggle to carve out territory independent of the repressive Turkish regime. Resistance persisted through the 1970s, when the creation of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) led to Kurdish separatists’ outright insurgency and terrorism against the state.

Kemalist secularism and its distrust of religion in public life are similar to the French laïcité model of secularism. Whereas American religious freedom can be thought of as “freedom to” express religion in public matters without state intervention, Turkey’s Kemalist tradition is more akin to “freedom from” public religious expression. The donning of the Islamic headscarf is forbidden in most government buildings and public institutions and for many years applied to university students under the Constitutional Court’s understanding of secularism.278 A prohibition on religious discrimination has not prevented the army from discharging servicemen for alleged Islamic fundamentalism—as evidenced by their praying five times daily or by their marriage to wives who wear the Islamic headscarf.

Critics decry these measures as being hostile to religion. Some charge that the largely Muslim population has for decades lived under a “militantly antireligious state elite and ideology.”279

ISLAM INSTITUTIONALIZED?

Turkey’s policies led to religion’s exclusion from public life precisely through its institutionalized control by the state. Sociologist Gunter Seufert notes that “in Turkey, Islam does not determine politics, but politics determine Islam.”280 However, religion’s separation from politics did not prevent it from informing popular opinion, social norms and, in some cases, even the political decisions and educational systems that affect all of Turkey’s more than 78 million citizens.281

Ataturk’s Republican People’s Party (CHP) dominated Turkish politics until multi-party democracy emerged in 1945.282 In the years since, the Army and its generals have acted as vigilant protectors of Turkey’s secular political system. The military has historically been Turkey’s most trusted public institution and views itself as a bulwark against religious incursions into state affairs.283 Turkish generals have perpetrated four coup d’états since 1960. Three of these—1960, 1971 and 1997—deposed rulers whose intentions and policies the Army perceived as threatening to Turkish secularism.284 The Army has also periodically shut down political parties it deemed Islamic-leaning. The microphone-megaphone pathway suggests that such measures can catalyze religious groups to embrace violence in lieu of licit and peaceful political expression.285 In the case of Turkey, however, Islamic groups did not pursue violence. Rather, they reorganized and ultimately won power with the election of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in 2002.
Under the AKP religious freedom has increased for observant Muslims, but not for non-Muslim minorities. Religion and Islam-based ethics classes remain mandatory for schoolchildren, frustrating non-Muslim Turks. The Turkish government continues to manage religion through its Religious Affairs Department, whose mission of promoting national unity is codified in the Constitution that the army imposed on the country following its 1982 coup. Government religious programs work only within the framework of Sunni Islam, leading Turkish Christians to complain that their programs and houses of worship see none of the millions of dollars that the department allocates annually. Other religious groups like the Alevi and Sufi minority populations resent being labeled generically “Muslim” on government identification documents. These groups, while free to worship, often face delays and denials in bureaucratic matters such as tax exemptions and permits for houses of worship. No non-Muslim group enjoys legal or cultural equality in civil or political life.

Imams and muezzins (those who issue the call to prayer in Turkey’s mosques) are hired, trained and fired by the state through the Religious Affairs Department. Friday sermons issued by imams around the country are written by sixteen religious scholars, all of whom are state officials. Proponents say that state control of sermons prevents inflammatory religious rhetoric and extremism. The department in 2004 mandated a sermon on women’s rights, for example, and routinely circulates sermons that promote liberal and democratic reforms. Turkish mosques denounce honor killings as both illegal and sinful.

This policy of state management of religion is designed to Westernize Turks in pursuit of the goal of modernization. The policy is widely supported in Europe, and many in America believe it aligns with the strategic interests of the United States. While some Turkish officials believe that the state’s control of sermons is responsible for curbing radicalization and improving the country’s security, others note that the policy is utterly inconsistent with religious freedom.

**RESURGENCE OF ISLAM IN TURKISH SOCIETY**

Major reforms have been undertaken by the democratically elected Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP), which first achieved a Parliamentary majority in 2002. The center-right AKP is composed of members who are themselves devout Muslims, including Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and President Abdullah Gul. Kemalists worry that the religious beliefs of these politicians are affecting not only their private lives but also AKP policies, political appointments, and the very direction of the Turkish state.

The AKP’s economic policies have overseen years of growth and are particularly popular among lower and middle class Turks in Anatolia. These same groups of pious
Muslims that benefit from and support AKP’s liberal economic policies also tend to support the party’s social values, which range from an emphasis on protecting the family to curbing the power of the military.293 Many of the party’s stances affect public religious expression and social norms. The AKP endorses the abolition of the headscarf ban and has steadily raised alcohol taxes. AKP supporters describe such policies as the normal responsiveness of a political party to the demands of its constituents. Kemalists, on the other hand, see these measures as evidence of the party’s gradual effort to Islamize Turkish dress and social behavior.294

Numerous constitutional reforms were endorsed by the AKP in 2010 and were subsequently passed in a nationwide referendum by a nearly 58 percent majority.295 These reforms, among other things, make party closures more difficult and increase parliamentary control over Constitutional Court appointments. Mustafa Akyol notes that a reform missing from this constitutional agenda is a new definition of secularism that firmly equalizes the status of religious minorities in the Turkish state.296

Secularists decry the recent tightening of restrictions on Internet access and free media, especially by those news outlets and reporters who criticize the state.297 The so-called Ergenekon or “sledgehammer” case has, since it began in 2007, resulted in the arrest, questioning and detention of hundreds of military officials, journalists and academics for supposed anti-government activities.298 Civil libertarians question the legitimacy and immense scope of the case, which has silenced the voices of many critics of the government and for the first time subordinated the secular-minded army to the civilian government.299 In this atmosphere, Kemalists are on the defensive and sensitive to religious incursions in public life. Supporters of the headscarf ban adamantly insist that lifting it will slowly marginalize those who reject the religious practice. Their worst fear is Turkey becoming “another Iran.”

Those advocating full religious freedom insist that headscarves must be permissible and that real democracy means allowing a fairly elected Islamic-leaning party to stay in power and govern according to the will of its largely socially conservative constituents. There have been moves in this direction under the AKP. Their leadership has brought changes in policy and dialogue that have brought Sunni Muslims unprecedented freedom and confidence to promote their Islamic identity in public life. As they demand voice in business, academia and politics, Islam itself is becoming a primary component of public discourse.

Such growing respect for religious freedom does much to forestall violent religious extremism in Turkey. By giving devout members of the country’s Sunni Muslim majority a stake in their political society through the pluralism and inclusion-moderation pathways, the liberalizing Turkey of recent years is diminishing the demand for violent extremism as a means of public expression. These positive pathways give voice to the country’s overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim population. However, in order to consolidate these trends toward non-violence and stable democracy, the government
must also afford full equality and religious freedom to its religious minorities, for whom the state’s selective, Islamist-oriented religious freedom poses a growing threat.

269 See page 10 in this text’s introduction for further information about these pathways.
272 Zibak, 2011.
274 Toft, Philpott, and Shah, 2011.
275 Olson, 2000.
277 See page 9 in this text’s introduction for further information on this pathway.
278 Argilli, 2011.
280 Gusten, 2011.
282 Kocak, 2005.
283 Cagaptay, 2011.
285 See page 8 in this text’s introduction for further information on this pathway.
286 Gusten, 2011.
287 “Europe Warns Turkey About Religion Box on ID Cards,” 2010.
288 Ibid.
289 Ibid.
293 Daragahi, 2011.
294 Cagaptay and Ersoz, 2010.
296 Gusten, 2011.
298 “Turkey ‘Coup Plot’: Seven Jailed in Ergenekon Inquiry,” 2011.
299 Ibid.
The case studies in this sourcebook explore connections between religious freedom and violent religious extremism. Such connections exist in numerous religious traditions and have appeared both historically and in the contemporary era. The case studies are not intended as comprehensive accounts of each country. They focus on the contemporary era; it is possible (though unlikely, we think) that substantially different patterns would emerge from deeper historical examination. At the same time, the case studies do not provide in-depth analysis of the religious dynamics in the countries examined or clarify the relationship between religious persecution and other possible causes of violent religious extremism.

Regarding the temporal and geographic scope of the hypothesized relationship between religious freedom and violent religious extremism this sourcebook explores, the cases presented herein suggest that the relationship is not confined to any particular region or religious tradition. The sourcebook includes cases of Muslim-majority and non-Muslim-majority societies, demonstrating that violent religious extremism is not confined to Muslim populations or Muslim-majority countries. Moreover, while the capacities and techniques of state repression are in many ways unique to the contemporary era, the relationship between religious repression and violent religious extremism does not appear to be a product of recent decades. Similar phenomena can be identified in earlier periods, such as the early twentieth-century case of Mexico, although the details vary.

Concerning other causes of extremism, the sourcebook does not claim that religious persecution explains all aspects of violent religious extremism. Religious persecution does appear to contribute to extremism under some conditions, such that, all things being equal, the latter would be less intense in the absence of the former. That being said, many other factors might contribute to the rise of violent religious movements, including the nature of the particular religious beliefs and political theologies of the religious actors and societies in question, economic crisis and deprivation, societal disruptions, war, sectarian tensions, and non-religious political repression. There is often a complex relationship between causal factors, in which it is their combination rather than any one factor alone that produces the observed outcome. However, the existence of several causal factors does not undermine the importance of the hypothesized relationship between religious freedom and violent religious extremism.
explored in this sourcebook. While the case studies do not attempt to weigh the relative importance of various causal factors in explaining extremism, it appears that in some cases religious repression may act as a catalyzing agent, without which other factors would not produce violent religious extremism.

**METHODODOLOGY**

This sourcebook employs qualitative analysis to highlight the relationship between violent religious extremism and religious persecution. This kind of analysis enables the reader to observe where complex causation exists and to discern the presence of the hypothesized relationships and pathways. The cases themselves are theory-developing, more than theory-testing. They focus on highlighting the validity of the hypothesized relationship under some conditions rather than rigorously testing hypotheses derived from any particular, robust theory.

Qualitative methods are increasingly being accepted as valid means through which to develop (and test) theories, rather than merely less rigorous alternatives to quantitative methods. Qualitative methods are particularly useful when there are not sufficient cases to allow for statistical analysis. Unlike their more quantitative counterparts, qualitative methods are well-placed to deal with complex causal arguments, in which several causal factors interact to produce an outcome or in which there are multiple causal paths to similar outcomes. They are also useful for process tracing or identifying the mechanisms and pathways connecting independent and dependent variables, as opposed to quantitative methods’ ability to demonstrate correlations between variables.

This sourcebook hypothesizes a specific type of causal relationship between religious persecution and violent religious extremism. In contrast to monocular arguments—in which there is one pathway through which an outcome occurs—this sourcebook draws on several arguments to present religious persecution as one of several means through which violent extremism arises. In many cases, there are numerous packages of causes or causal recipes behind a single outcome. That is, various factors can combine in different ways to produce a phenomenon. War is one example. While two or more states competing over a territory or resources may be a necessary condition for war—war could not occur without such competition—it is not sufficient. In other words, competition alone does not inevitably lead to war. Instead, numerous other factors combined with competition can produce war: miscalculation of either side’s strength, domestic political consideration, alliance obligations, etc. However, in some cases, the competition provides the catalyst, or the necessary link, that produces the outcome of war.

This sourcebook approaches the relationship between religious persecution and violent extremism in a similar way. As noted, religious persecution is usually not the
only factor that leads to violent extremism. When religious persecution does lead to violent extremism, it often does so in combination with other factors. Yet, the case studies provide support for the hypothesis that violent religious extremism would not have arisen in several real-world cases—or would not have been as intense or sustained—in the absence of religious persecution. In some cases religious persecution may act as a catalyst or trigger.

The sourcebook also posits the presence of several pathways or mechanisms connecting religious persecution and violent religious extremism. Following George and Bennett’s definition, “mechanism” refers to “unobservable…processes through which agents with causal capacities operate, but only in specific contexts or conditions, to transfer energy, information or matter to other entities.” That is, mechanisms are the pathways through which an outcome occurs, rather than the variables that effect change. The focus of an analysis based on mechanisms is not just whether particular independent and dependent variables are related—in this case religious repression and violent religious extremism—but the actual process through which one affects the other. Also, despite the connotations of the term, mechanisms are understood here as pathways rather than fixed, ubiquitous causal relationships. They are context-dependent, and different mechanisms may occur in different situations, or the ultimate effect of a mechanism may vary based on the existence of other mechanisms and the conditions in which they occur. Thus, for this sourcebook, the several pathways outlined in the introduction do not imply a rigidly mechanistic relationship between religious persecution and violent religious extremism or suggest that all these mechanisms occur in each case. Instead, they indicate a nuanced and multifaceted relationship between the two phenomena, and the importance of analysis within cases to determine the manner in which violent religious extremism arises.

The cases in this sourcebook serve primarily as “theory-building” cases. As George and Bennett discuss, the conventional approach to case studies is “theory-testing,” or using cases to assess the validity of a theory’s implications. However, cases are also particularly useful in building theories. Insights from the cases serve to expand upon a theoretical argument, especially when a theoretical literature is underdeveloped. George and Bennett point in particular to “‘building block’ studies of…subtypes of a phenomenon,” in which cases represent one possible combination of causes and effects but do not test all implications of a theory. As the hypothesized relationship between religious freedom and violent religious extremism analyzed in this sourcebook is in an early stage of exploration, the cases are intended both to indicate whether the hypothesized relationship is plausible and to provide insight into further research. Because the sourcebook outlines specific pathways connecting religious persecution and violent religious extremism, the cases can be considered individual “building blocks” towards future research. This future research, we hope, will be both more extensive in its coverage of cases (both contemporary and historic) and more focused in its analysis of the strength of particular pathways.
Although the sourcebook relies on case studies to elucidate the hypothesized relationship between religious freedom and violent religious extremism, quantitative methods would also be helpful in studying this issue. The select annotated bibliography describes several pioneering efforts to use quantitative methods to demonstrate a meaningful connection between religious freedom and violent religious extremism. With sufficient data, additional studies could use statistical analysis to determine whether there is a correlation between religious persecution and the rise or intensity of violent religious extremism. They could also control for alternative explanations that would indicate whether religious persecution’s apparent effect is due to other factors. The focus on qualitative methods in this sourcebook is intended to reveal the complementarity between the kinds of case studies developed in the sourcebook, on one hand, and quantitative analyses, on the other. In addition, it suggests that a possible counterargument to the sourcebook’s findings—that there is no or only isolated evidence of a connection between religious freedom and violent religious extremism—is unfounded.

It is perhaps noteworthy that most of the material in the sourcebook demonstrates negative pathways between religious freedom and violent religious extremism. The simple reason is that the relationship between religious freedom and violent religious extremism is most empirically visible from negative cases. Cases of active restrictions on religious freedom tend to provide the most vivid illustration of the relationship between religious freedom and violent religious extremism. In order to further explore and advance our understanding of the relationship between religious freedom and political development in its many aspects—including the construction not only of political order and stability but also of political justice and freedom—it would be highly desirable to develop a wider array of “positive” case studies that exhibit the complex ways in which the presence of religious freedom can contribute both to the containment of violent religious extremism as well as to the construction and consolidation of stable democracies.

300 See the Mexico case study on page 33.
301 See the “Scope and Methodology” section below.
302 See Mahoney and Goertz, “A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research,” 2006; George and Bennett, Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences, 2005.
304 George and Bennett, 2005, page 137.
305 Ibid.
306 Ibid., chapters 7 and 11.
307 Ibid., chapter 4.
308 Ibid.
309 Ibid.

This book discusses the relationship between religious persecution and violence using a new data set on religious freedom and a few case studies. The authors analyze the factors contributing to religious conflict, and advance a religious economy approach, which emphasizes the regulation of “religious markets” in explaining the behavior of religious actors. The authors conclude that when governments put in place restrictions on religious activity the result is intensified religious hostility, even if the government actions were intended to minimize strife between and among religious groups. Thus religious repression—in the form of governmental restrictions on religion—makes higher levels of religion-related violence in a country more likely.

This book is a mixed-methods study, combining quantitative analysis with a few case studies. Religious freedom and religious hostility are measured using the authors’ data set, which codes restrictions on religion using US State Department International Religious Freedom reports from 2001 to 2005 for 198 countries. The data set includes numerous indicators for types of government and social restrictions on religion, which are combined into two indexes that are sums of the scores for the individual indicators scaled from 1 to 10. These indexes are then used in a structural equation model, which demonstrates the reciprocal relationship between the two indexes even when alternative explanations are accounted for. The authors complement this quantitative analysis with case studies of countries with varying levels of government and social restrictions on religion: Japan, Brazil, Nigeria, China, India, and Iran. Grim and Finke’s combination of quantitative analysis with case studies, and their novel measurement of religious restrictions, make the results of their study rather conclusive.


This book is a study of rebellions in Muslim countries, specifically the reason why so many Muslim rebellions become violent and protracted. Hafez claims that violent extremism in Muslim countries is the result of government repression of Islamist groups. Drawing on social movement theory, Hafez argues that rebellion in Muslim
countries is the result of a strategic choice on the part of Islamist movements in response to government repression, while the protracted nature of such rebellions arises from extremist elements within Islamist militant groups. Thus prolonged and severe repression of religious groups in Muslim countries makes violent revolt and radicalism among such groups more likely.

This book is a qualitative study, with cases of rebellions in Muslim countries, as well as potential rebellions. Hafez discusses religious repression in terms of political exclusion and active exclusion of Islamist groups by regimes. Violent extremism, in turn, is approached as the formation of “exclusive organizations” with “anti-system” frames that wage violent struggles against the state. Hafez’s study includes case studies of Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Pakistan, Tunisia, and Central Asian Muslim states, covering the 1980s and 1990s. Hafez’s study of numerous cases of rebellion—and, importantly, non-rebellion—makes his findings rather robust, although comparison to non-Muslim countries with similar conditions would strengthen the conclusions.


This book examines the political influence of religion around the world. In addition to a myriad of topics relating to the social and political evils associated with governmental repression of religious freedom, the authors hone in on the relationship between religious freedom and religious extremism.

They argue that if governments fail to respect the institutional independence of religious actors, especially through systematic repression, the more these governments will encourage pathological forms of religious politics, including religion-based terrorism and religion-related civil wars insofar as religious actors’ desire for independence and influence leads them to react with intensity. Particularly dangerous, they explain, is a religious group that is both subject to severe political repression and which holds a political ideology that sanctions violence. They illustrate the cases of Algeria and Sudan in demonstrating that such groups indeed take up arms against the repressive state.


In this article in the top journal in political science, Philpott provides a framework to study what he calls religion’s “political ambivalence.” By this he means the variations in religious political activity, with religious groups sometimes supporting democratization efforts and other times waging violent conflict against the state. Philpott argues that the interaction between a religious group’s “political theology” and the degree and type of differentiation between religion and state explain the political activities of a group. When religious groups with radical political theologies
are present in states with low religion-state separation and a conflictual relationship between the two, violent movements are likely to arise. In contrast, groups with moderate political theology in states with higher differentiation are more likely to support democratization.

This article is primarily theoretical, with some illustrative case studies. Philpott discusses violent extremism in terms of whether religious groups advocate democratic reform or political violence, and religious repression in terms of whether religion-state differentiation is high or low and whether the relationship between the two is conflictual or consensual. Philpott’s empirical work includes a discussion of religious groups’ varying attitudes towards democratization, communal violence and terrorism in the post-World War Two era. For his discussion of terrorism, Philpott also draws on quantitative data on terrorism from the Terrorism Knowledge Base. Philpott’s discussion of the interaction between political theology and religion-state differentiation was a major theoretical advance in the study of religion and politics.


This is an article from one of the top journals in international relations, which discusses the relationship between Islam and civil war. Toft argues that religious conflicts in Muslim societies become particularly severe through the convergence of the extreme nature of religious violence and political factors unique to many Muslim countries. She argues that the presence of holy sites and oil near many Muslim countries, the significance of jihad in Islamic thinking, and the lack of a historical episode equivalent to the Thirty Years’ War make Islam more likely to be utilized in conflicts than other religions. When political elites can benefit from resources held by religious groups, there is latent religious tension in a society, and elites control access to information, they may initiate what Toft calls “religious outbidding,” using religious symbols to gain support for their efforts and creating a religious conflict that becomes severe and protracted.

Toft’s article is a mixed-methods study, combining quantitative analysis of civil wars with a case study. Toft measures violent extremism in terms of protracted and severe civil wars in which religion is either a “central” or “peripheral” issue. Religious repression, in turn, is conceptualized as elite control of information that facilitates the “religious outbidding” that radicalizes conflicts. Toft’s quantitative analysis includes civil wars between 1940 and 2000, using a chi-squared test to demonstrate the statistical significance of the observed frequency and severity of religious civil wars among Muslim countries. Her qualitative analysis looks at Sudan’s two civil wars, from 1955 to 1972 and 1983 to the present. While Toft’s quantitative analysis is relatively simple and she only addresses one case of Islam and civil war, her empirics provide convincing support for her theoretical arguments.

This chapter in an edited volume examines the causes of violence by Islamist movements in the Middle East. Anderson points to the exclusion of Islamist movements from political systems in the Middle East—rather than elements inherent in their ideologies or Islam itself—to explain Islamist violence. When regimes repress Islamist groups, they have no incentive to try to work peacefully within the political process and instead advocate overthrowing the system, which can lead to violent conflicts like those in Algeria in the 1990s. Thus, violent extremism by religious groups in the Middle East is the result of government repression of these groups. This chapter is primarily theoretical, with occasional illustrative examples from Middle Eastern countries in the 1980s and 1990s. She approaches violent extremism as the desire to overthrow the government and replace it with an Islamic state, which is often accompanied by violence. Religious repression, in turn, is discussed as exclusion from the political process. This piece presents a convincing argument, which has been influential in countering “essentialist” explanations of Islamist violence as arising from Islam. The lack of rigorous comparative case studies, however, limits the robustness of these findings. Additionally, Anderson does not devote enough attention to the means through which the religious beliefs of Islamist groups may contribute to violence in the presence of state repression.


This article in a scholarly journal analyzes the conditions under which religious institutions participate in ethnic conflict. Fox points to the variation in whether religious organizations support violent conflict or the regime, arguing that a focus on the resources of the organizations alone is insufficient in explaining this. Instead, the extent of religious repression and general political repression explain religious organizations’ attitudes towards the state. When religious organizations face repression, they are more likely to contribute to uprisings by ethnic minority groups. Thus, violent extremism, in terms of religious participation in uprisings, is more likely in the context of state repression.

This is a quantitative study, using the Minorities at Risk (MAR) database, which contains information on ethnic minorities around the world. The study uses data from 1992 to 1993. The dependent variable is the extent of ethnic minorities’ mobilization, and the independent variables are the religious involvement in this mobilization and extent of repression by the state. Fox measures conflict through MAR’s variables for levels of protest and rebellion among minority groups, while religious involvement in the conflict is measured through the extent of institutionalized religion in a minority group. Religious repression, then, is the presence of a religious grievance on the part
of the minority group and political repression of the minority group by the state. The data analysis consists of correlations and significance tests between the variables. The results of the quantitative analysis are compelling, although the applicability of the data used to the question of religious mobilization could be questioned.


This article in a scholarly journal explores how minority groups make use of divergence within religion to mobilize support for violent action when the minority group is excluded from government. The authors posit that while religion per se is not a source of violence, extremist elements of ethnic minorities whose religion differs from the majority may use religious divergence to mobilize group members to perpetrate terrorism.

They test these propositions by using quantitative data on ethnic minority party inclusion in legislative coalitions, ethnic minority group religion and the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) to match perpetrators with ethnic groups for all democracies from 1970 through 2004. They specifically test the hypotheses that extremist factions of an excluded group will be more likely to carry out terrorist attacks when the group’s members belong to a different religion as well as when they belong to a different denomination or sect of a religion than the majority.


This is the third in a series of reports by the Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion & Public Life analyzing the extent to which governments and societies around the world impinge on religious beliefs and practices. These reports have drawn widespread attention to the fact that a substantial portion of the world’s population—75 percent as of mid-2010—lives in countries where governments, social groups or individuals restrict people’s ability to freely practice their faith. The reports also have generated significant interest for how they bring social science research methods to bear on the study of religious restrictions. The methodology used in the reports provides a quantitative framework that those involved in the study of religious freedom can use to monitor changes in restrictions on religion over time, across the world, in specific geographical regions and in individual countries.

The report shows that most of the people living under either highly restricted or very highly restricted religious freedom live in about 73 countries, or 37 percent of the total number of countries in the world. Of those 73, most are either Muslim-majority countries, nations with communist governments (e.g., China, North Korea, Vietnam, and Cuba), or are other large non-Muslim countries such as India, Burma,
and Russia. The report further shows that over the four years between 2006 and 2010 the status of religious freedom appeared to be deteriorating rapidly; the global trend includes Western countries and the United States; worldwide, Christians are the most vulnerable to persecution.

Most relevant to this sourcebook is that this and previous Pew Research Center reports on religious restrictions found high correlations between government-imposed religious restrictions and religious violence. Specifically, it found that higher scores on Pew’s Government Restrictions Index are associated with higher scores on the Social Hostilities Index and vice-versa. Government restrictions include government laws, policies, and actions that restrict religious beliefs or practices. Social hostilities refer to acts of religious hostility by private individuals, organizations and social groups, including mob or sectarian violence, harassment over attire for religious reasons, and other-religion related intimidation or abuse. The concept of social hostilities thus significantly overlaps with—though is also not identical to—the concept of “violent religious extremism” used in this sourcebook.

Furthermore, the new Pew study finds that some government restrictions have a stronger association with social hostilities than others. Government policies or actions that clearly favor one religion over others have the strongest association with social hostilities involving religion. The average level of social hostilities among the countries with very high levels of government favoritism (SHI = 4.8) is much higher than the average level of social hostilities among countries with low levels of government favoritism (1.3). Other government actions that are strongly associated with social hostilities involving religion are (in descending order): the use of force against religious groups; failing to intervene to stop religious discrimination; and limiting conversion from one religion to another. At the same time, social hostilities involving religion were lowest among countries where governments do not harass or intimidate religious groups; national laws and policies protect religious freedom; governments do not interfere with religious worship or practices; and governments do not use force against religious groups.

DATA SOURCES

Below are several data sources from scholars and research centers that are relevant to the study of religious freedom and violent extremism.


This data set provides the indexes of government restrictions on religion, social restrictions on religion, and government favoritism of religion that Grim and Finke developed for use in their 2011 book and several scholarly publications. The data set
is available through the Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA).

Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, “Rising Restrictions on Religion,”

This project is an ongoing study at the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, which collects data on government restrictions and social hostilities relating to religion and calculates indexes for each country. The first report, released in December 2009, presented the level of government restrictions and social hostilities around the world and their relationship to each other. The second and third reports, released in August 2011 and September 2012, highlighted changes in countries’ scores and provided details on harassment of religious groups and anti-blasphemy laws. While the raw data is not available, rolling averages of the index scores for each country and individual variables are presented in the reports.

Minorities at Risk Data, http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/data.asp

This is a data set maintained by the University of Maryland's Center for International Development and Conflict Management. The data set contains information on minority groups around the world, and their relationship to the state, including state restrictions on the groups and groups’ grievances, protests, and rebellion against the state. The data set includes information on religious minorities and religious grievances, and has been used in scholarly publications to analyze religious violence.


This data set is maintained by Jonathan Fox at Bar-Ilan University. It includes numerous variables on GIR for 175 countries, as well as an overall measure of GIR. The data set has been used in several scholarly publications, and a second round of the project is currently underway. The data set is publicly available.
Below are several suggestions for further reading that may be of interest to those who wish to further explore the relationship between religious freedom and violent religious extremism.


“Abdolmalek Rigi, Leader of Iranian Jundallah, has been Captured by Islamic terrorists”. Al Arabiya, 2010.


Renard, Thomas. “Aqim’s Offensive Reveals Shift from Insurgency to Terrorist Tactics in Algeria,” in *Terrorism Monitor* 6, no. 18, 2008.


“Senegal.” *Uppsala Conflict Data Program Encyclopedia*. Uppsala University Department of Peace and Conflict Research, n.d.


Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India, 2006.


The Religious Freedom Project (RFP) at Georgetown University’s Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs began in January 2011 with the generous support of the John Templeton Foundation. The RFP is the nation’s only university-based program devoted exclusively to the analysis of religious freedom, a basic human right restricted in many parts of the world. Our team of interdisciplinary scholars examines different understandings of religious liberty as it relates to other fundamental freedoms; its importance for democracy; and its role in social and economic development, international diplomacy, and the struggle against violent religious extremism. Our target audiences are the academy, the media, policymakers, and the general public, both here and abroad. For more information about the RFP’s research, teaching, publications, conferences, and workshops, visit http://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/rfp.

About the Berkley Center

The Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University, created within the Office of the President in 2006, is dedicated to the interdisciplinary study of religion, ethics, and public life. Through research, teaching, and service, the center explores global challenges of democracy and human rights; economic and social development; international diplomacy; and interreligious understanding. Two premises guide the center’s work: that a deep examination of faith and values is critical to address these challenges, and that the open engagement of religious and cultural traditions with one another can promote peace.