1. Dimensionality of religion

1.1 PARTIES AND SOCIAL CLEAVAGES

Lipset and Rokkan (1967) were the first to introduce religion into modern social science. They argue that in competitive party systems cross-local communication matters and party functions can be instrumental or representative. Moreover, they suggest two dimensions of cleavage – territorial–cultural and functional – and four types of cleavage across the criteria of polity, economy, integration, and locality: center vs. periphery culture, nation-state vs. church privileges, landed interests vs. industrial entrepreneurs, and workers vs. owners (ibid.: 9–11). Given the four cleavages they posit, four corner regime solutions are identified:


Figure 1.1 The dome of Hagia Sophia, Istanbul, Turkey

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communal federalism, functional corporatism, irredentist totalitarianism, and nationalist totalitarianism (ibid.: 24). While they identify a linkage between the working class and societal openness, their analysis is structural and historically dependent. In order to explain the sequential cleavages in administrative organization, religion, class, and economic development, as well as property, they suggest critical historical events that provided the grounds for these path-breaking changes: the Reformation, the National Revolution, and the Industrial Revolution. There is a linear evolutionary pattern among these three events. The center–periphery cleavage, which was instigated by the Reformation and Counterreformation, evolved into the distinction between national Protestant Churches and the supranational authority of the Vatican (ibid.: 13–14 and 34). Thus, the peak of the Reformation can be treated as a national movement itself, which granted localities financial independence from the administrative center, and local rulers spiritual and moral independence from Rome. This is why Lipset and Rokkan think it is possible to treat the French Revolution as the main Reformation peak, which in the 19th century consolidated the separation of the Church from the State and initiated secularism as a form of public finance organization and intergovernmental relations. This was particularly the case, they suggest, for religiously mixed or Catholic countries, because established Protestant Churches within predefined State jurisdictions had already been co-opted into State structures (ibid.: 13–14).

At the same time, the land–industry divide, which was caused by the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century, gave rise to a different set of conflicts linked to the level of agricultural tariffs, industrial base transformation, and the owner–worker relationship (ibid.: 34–40). The Russian Revolution is regarded by Lipset and Rokkan as a key second-order event of the Industrial Revolution. This interpretation assumes that in the Russian Revolution workers achieved the highest level of class consciousness and were thus incentivized to join their national revolutionary movement. Nevertheless, it may well be the case that worker class interests were much better served in social-democratic Scandinavia than in the communist Soviet Union. Industrial base transformation followed an elite change at the level of government; it was simply not the cause of it.

In their model Lipset and Rokkan treat religion as the first social cleavage that found its expression in the power struggle of the Reformation. Political and economic change as these are modeled in the Democratic and Industrial Revolutions represent sequential phenomena of the Reformation (ibid.: 38). This is why the birth of party systems is important. It signals the transition from Roman Catholic religious authority, political authoritarianism, and feudal economic interests to national Protestant Churches or secularism, political openness and representation, and industrial devel-
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The sequence of thresholds that hallmark this transition is the following: (1) Legitimation, (2) Incorporation, (3) Representation, and (4) Majority power (ibid.: 26–30). Sartori (1969: 202–204) points out that the Lipset and Rokkan theory is treating party systems as mechanisms of class representation under conditions of industrialization. According to Lipset and Rokkan (1967: 207–214), cleavages are either likely to be mutually reinforcing or mutually neutralizing. The freezing of party systems that they observe occurs because party systems in the 1960s reflect equilibria choices of the 1920s; nevertheless the existence of political uncertainty undermines the evolutionary, yet fixed, socio-political arrangements implied in the research programs of Lipset and Rokkan (ibid.). Torcal and Mainwaring (2003) provide evidence that the stability of social cleavages holds, even when the original cause for their emergence does not exist any more; they believe in the social-based emergence of societal divisions. They suggest that political agency combined with authoritarian legacies shaped the Chilean party system, particularly in its post-authoritarian period after 1973–1990 (ibid.).

Separation of religious institutions from the State is treated as key to modernization, political and economic. Nevertheless, religion as a social cleavage did not end in the 19th century, when secularism formed the institutional grounds of the modern nation-state. It perpetuated its influence in the 20th century; the differences between Catholicism and Protestantism have been also reflected in the voting preferences of citizens in multi-confessional societies. In Switzerland, the Catholic electorate favored higher levels of statism, lesser alignment with the Nazi party, and stressed the significance of family and communal values as well as political demands for social welfare; there is a clearly limited anti-capitalist inclination in Catholicism (Geissbuehler, 2007). Furthermore, Christian democracy has been traditionally linked to Catholicism, whereas social democracy has been traditionally linked to Protestantism (ibid.). In the Swiss political system, the voters of the Christian Democratic Party regard family values as extremely important for their choice, while voters of the Social Democratic Party have a special interest in environmental issues and the rights of the working class (Ladner, 2001).

Nevertheless, it is very important to keep in mind that culture and thus religion matters for the support of political preferences in multiple ways; political culture is usually defined as a set of values that reveal the preferences of the majority on dichotomous issues such as social welfare vs. equality of opportunity (Feldman and Zaller, 1992). Lipset and Rokkan are wrong when they treat the separation of religion from the State as a condition for modernization. One can make an argument for quite the opposite. Religion matters in party systems and voter alignments in different ways
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than it did in the past. The question now is not whether education should be offered by the State or a religious institution or whether the State should pay the salaries of priests. Religion can be used in politics as an agenda-setting factor, when it comes to issues of minority rights protection, as a model of administrative organization, useful for community development, or as an institutional parameter for welfare provision arrangements. The use of the word religion may correspond to an institution, individual faith, dogma, welfare networks, or everyday life rules. Moreover, the subject of religious preferences can be a citizen, a bureaucrat, a government, an interest group, a civic organization, or a political leader.

As Levy (1999) argues, welfare policies do not need to be inefficient and thus supported only by left-wing parties; the case of Christian democratic reformers in France, Italy, and the Netherlands indicates that correcting for inefficiencies in welfare does not necessarily mean reduction of the welfare state. This is why the transformation of vice into virtue becomes a window of opportunity; the implementation of welfare reforms can take place without compromises in efficiency (ibid.). Therefore, the high dimensionality of religion undermines the credibility of the social cleavages theory in democratic and nondemocratic societies. It is simply impossible to treat religion as a fixed set of preference points that may have some predictive value over an electoral outcome or a bureaucratic appointment. Religion relies on tradition, but it is also a living and dynamic component of collective identity in any society. Religious norms are not only translated in terms of interparty political competition in democracies, but also in terms of majoritarian bureaucratic organization. In any political community, I argue that the religion of the majority influences the choices of bureaucrats, sets a threshold for public welfare, and is reflected in intergovernmental relations and the provision of local public goods. This proposition holds at different levels for homogenous and diverse political communities.

In Section 1.2, I discuss the dialectic features of Eastern Orthodoxy and its connection to Marxism. Section 1.3 compares Eastern Orthodoxy and Judaism from a Weberian standpoint and offers novel analytical answers to questions of authority and secularism. Section 1.4 criticizes the Durkheimian model and the distinction between the sacred and the profane, while Section 1.5 provides synthetic observations on religion and political economy that underpin the rest of the book.
1.2 DIALECTIC PROCESSES

Lipset and Rokkan were the first who linked religion to political regimes, but they were certainly not the first who understood religion as a powerful instrument in mass politics and economic organization. I start my review of classical social theory and its relevance to religion with Marx and some of his select intellectual descendants. The primary reason for that is the influence of Marx and Marxism on the political and economic development of Russia in the 20th century, the Zionist movement that led to the emergence of Israel, and the political mobilization of Palestinians since 1948. More importantly, Marx and the intellectuals influenced by him have been some of the staunchest opponents of religion and its institutions. Many scholars of the Soviet Union and Russia have treated the role of religion in Soviet or modern Russian politics as insignificant, due to the proclaimed anti-religious and atheist character of the Soviet regime.
and the treatment of the Russian Orthodox Church as a government agency in the post-Soviet period. In Israel, there is no formal separation between religious and State institutions. Nevertheless, the implementation of democratic rules in policy-making allows a high degree of political autonomy in the Muslim and Christian areas of the country. Hence, Israel represents a plurality of religious norms in its public sphere, the economic and administrative consequences of which will be analyzed in subsequent parts of this book. What I am going to point out here is the non-obvious and a topic that has been treated insufficiently in the literature: the striking similarities between state–society dialectics in Marx and divine–human dialectics in religion, with particular focus on Eastern Orthodox theology.

Marx wrote extensively on religion both as his main focus of analysis (*On the Jewish Question* (Marx and Lederer, 1958)) and in conjunction with the core of his political–economic interpretation of modern capitalism (the *Economic and Philosopher Manuscripts of 1844* (Marx and Engels, 1988)). In his treatment of *The Jewish Question*, he argues that the preservation of religious identity puts the Jews in direct opposition to the Christian State they live in; Marx here understands religion as a political and economic identity that prevents people from political emancipation (Tucker, 1963; Marx and Lederer, 1958: 27–30). He parallelizes Judaism with commercial power and Christianity with political power; because he treats Judaism as a critique to Christianity, he draws the parallel between Christianity and the legitimacy of political authority on the one hand, and Judaism and freedom of transactions and civil society on the other (ibid.: 33–51). However, Marx makes several methodological errors, which allow multiple criticisms against his theory. While he understands and analyzes the political and structural effects of religion – Christianity and Judaism for that matter – on state–society relations, he treats them from a hierarchical rather than a substantive standpoint. According to Marx, Christians as the dominant group control the State, and Jews are only allowed to operate at the level of civil society, which is again an extension of the State as a Christian structure; the only opportunity for the emergence of real citizens is the destruction of the bond between Christianity and the State on the one hand, as well as between Judaism and civil society on the other (ibid.).

What Marx mixes here is religion as an objectification mechanism for State and society that undermines political and certainly human emancipation, and religion as a feudal institution that perpetuates categorical differences and injustice across the members of a society. I agree with Marx that states have religious origins. Nevertheless, Marx ignores the internal structure of religious institutions such as the networks of the Roman Catholic Church or the monitoring capacity of the Lutheran Church of Germany over its local parishes. His treatment of the State and civil society
as the Christian and Jewish components of the public sphere implies that religious norms facilitate human alienation and thus objectification. Rather than observing religious norms as a set of fixed and dynamic elements that affect the distributive role of administrative agencies, their effectiveness, the commitments of politicians to the provision of public goods, and the citizens’ material dependence on the State, he provides an ideal form of State without religion: a real secular State.

The antagonistic relation that is implied between Christians and Jews, the state and the civil society, is now juxtaposed in the relationship between the individual and God; in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, Marx suggests that religion is yet another mode leading to the alienation of the worker from himself and thus to his objectification, because he belongs to God and not to himself (ibid.: 58–60). Nevertheless, Marx fails to see that the alternative he proposes is also defined by strong religious origins. Communism from a Marxist standpoint can be seen as a collectivist Reformation against the Protestant foundations of 19th century capitalism. In that sense, what I propose here is a radically different reading of Marx through the lens of religion: abstinence from private property and approximation of absolute social justice are principles prevalent in the ideas of St. John the Chrysostom and Joseph Volotskii, the two most significant intellectuals of Greek and Russian Orthodoxy respectively. The common normative foundations of Eastern Orthodox collectivism and Marxism do not imply a strong anti-capitalist predisposition of Eastern Orthodoxy vis-à-vis capitalism. The identification of non-capitalist elements in the core of Eastern Orthodox theology and the structure of the monastery as the epicenter for the production of theological thought and spiritual authority in the Eastern Orthodox Church are in line with Marx’s definitions of economic regulation and political hierarchy in a property-less society.

Adorno (2003: 40–54), in his lecture on negative dialectics, argues that the Hegelian triple scheme of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis can be achieved not only in its positive but also its negative form; he suggests that the negation of the negation is the *anamnesis* of violence, which is corrected by the expression of nonidentity and the difference between reason and the pursuit of materialist objectives. The logic of apophatic dialectics in Adorno reinforces my argument that Hesychast theology can be interpreted with the dialectical method and can suggest also from that perspective a critical lens for analytical Marxism. The dialectical scheme is as follows: (1) Inward looking and apophasis of the essence of God; (2) Interpersonal reflexivity and negation of sins through the society; and (3) *Theosis*, that is, union with God and purification from sins. I identify the continuum of apophatic dialectics that links the movement of Hesychasm
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in medieval Orthodox monastic ethics with Marx, Adorno, and Marcuse (1961) and their theories on religion, economy, and the State. While historical interpretation and the tracing of common ground between 14th century Byzantium and 19th or 20th century Western Europe is not possible, the methodological core of economic collectivism reveals a consistent adherence to the dialectical interpretation of economy and society, and, more concretely, the relationship of the human to the divine. This reality lends itself to three primary findings: (1) The differences between collectivism and individualism (see also Greif, 1994) can be mapped onto the difference between metaphysical and profane states; (2) Collectivist rather than individualist state structures require a higher degree of centralization; and (3) Marxist political thought can trace its methodological roots to Byzantine theology rather than directly to the Presocratic philosophers through Hegel.

In his analysis of Orthodox Marxism, Lukács (1971: 18–19) restates the definition of dialectical materialism: men’s consciousness is defined by their social existence and it is not consciousness that defines their existence. The emergence of a proletariat that is conscious of its class identity requires its socialization in the bourgeois society. What matters is the fulfillment of the historical process, its teleology through class revolution, and the emergence of a universal community that embodies the ideals and represents the interests of all workers (ibid.: 20–24). The aggregation of individual interests into a collectivist model of action and state-building reveals the criteria for a proletarian community: (1) National or ethnic boundaries do not matter, when it comes to the realization of class consciousness; (2) Proletarian interests are expected to be transformed into universal interests for the consolidation of a classless society; and (3) The dialectical nature of the world development process guarantees the final victory of the working class over the bourgeoisie. If one substitutes class with religion, bourgeois interests with worldly sins, and the classless society with the Divine Kingdom, it becomes obvious that he can trace the fundamentals of Eastern Orthodox theology, as this has been condensed in the writings not only of St. John the Chrysostom, but also the Hesychast movement and its most prominent representative, Gregory Palamas, Metropolitan of Thessaloniki in the 14th century. As Mouzelis (2010: 272–274) underscores, the core of Hesychasm as an intellectual movement in the Eastern Orthodox Church is shaped by *apophatic* (negative) theology; *kenosis*, the purification process that leads the individual to *theosis*, its union with God, implies the removal of all cognitive barriers – sins – and the preparation of the individual to connect with divine energies.

This *apophatic* nature of *theosis* assumes the absence of an instrumental relationship between the human and the divine and implies that interhuman
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relationships should be placed beyond material purposes and objectifying ends. The institutional influence of the Hesychasts on the administrative and political structures of the empire diffused their principles and organizational norms into the economy and bureaucracy of the late Byzantine State (ibid.). Dostoevsky revived the Byzantine tradition of Hesychasm, already present in Old Russian literature, by stressing its three dimensions in his story “A Dream of a Ridiculous Man”: apophaticism, kenoticism, and iurodstvo (Grillaert, 2007: II). This is in line with what Mouzelis (2010: 271) argues about the definitions of God – apophatic and cataphatic – and their meaning for the development of intersubjective relationships.

1.3 STATE FORMATION

The interpretation of Eastern Orthodoxy as a dialectical religion constitutes only the first pillar in my theory on religion and political economy.
Max Weber provided the first complete theoretical grounds for world religions as economic systems and their impact on economic development. First, he defined religion as economic ethics; although he recognizes that economic ethics is also determined by other factors such as geographical and historical circumstances, he suggests that every religion corresponds to an ideal form of class organization and socio-economic structure (Weber, 1920, Band I: 238–241). Suffering and happiness are seen as the two sides of divine enforcement; theodicy in the form of suffering is treated as God’s response to human injustice at the individual or the collective level (ibid.: 242–248). This is why the religious class emerged; in order to minimize the suffering of the people by delegating divine enforcement in the society. Weber draws parallels between the priest and the worker; the separation between the administrative and private spheres in the clerical profession is analogous to the separation of the worker from his product in a capitalist economy (ibid.: 268). The distinction between material rationalization under a patrimonial system and formal rationalization under a capitalist system is reflected in religious norms, and organization and is linked with charisma in the former case and legalism in the latter (ibid.: 272–274). Thus, the law of religion is a critical indicator for the nature and structure of both advanced and backward political economies.

I propose that there can be no clear distinction between secular and ecclesiastical authority. Weber’s account on ancient Judaism could not have taken into account the Zionist movement and the role of religion in the formation of modern Israel. Moreover, in states with significant religious minorities, as is the case with Islam in Israel or Russia, local administrative agencies may isolate better the effect of religious norms on administrative form, capacity, and objectives. I intend to extend Weberian rationality beyond the boundaries of Calvinist ethics and state secularism and correct for its omissions or oversimplifications. Religion is more structure than it is ethics. And structural forms in social and political institutions can predict collective decisions. If the State is composed of three groups – central elites, decentralized bureaucracy, and citizens – then religious norms can reflect the policy preferences of the majority among central elites, local bureaucracy, and the people as participants in the bureaucratic process. Moreover, at the macro level, religion can condition state formation and types of political regimes, beyond the traditional distinction between democracies and dictatorships. If religion is linked to social welfare expectations by the people, then the leader has an incentive to commit to their fulfillment in order to retain his authority. The dichotomy between democracies and dictatorships matters at first because under conditions of representative government there is a predefined replacement mechanism, in case the head of state fails to fulfill his promise. Under conditions of oli-
garchy or dictatorship, the replacement mechanism is informal and defined by the members of the ruling elite. At the same time, religious norms allow for different levels of policy discretion and thus lead to multiple regulatory equilibria in local administrative agencies. Under conditions of imperfect information, policy discretion is lower and regulatory quality is higher compared to central government agencies. Local rather than central government principals have more incentives to monitor the provision of public goods to citizens, because it is cheaper and better for their reputation, no matter whether they are elected or not.

The transition from legitimacy to legality facilitated the vertical rationalization of political authority and economic activity in Calvinist societies. As Gorski (2003: 97–98) points out in his account on the political ethos of Frederick William I, the king’s conviction – of the infusion of financial transactions and bureaucratic practice with solid disciplinary rules – led to the emergence of an effective administrative and fiscal rationality, Prussian style.

When it comes to ancient Judaism, Max Weber (1920, Band III: 20–26) identifies four key organizational elements: (1) Clan structure and (2) Increased military capacity; (3) Legal regulation of inter-clan disputes; and (4) Commercial activity based on revenues from agriculture. The ancient Hebrew commonwealth treated cities as its main unit of political and economic organization, following the Mediterranean paradigm of the Greek polis (ibid.: 27–32). Decentralized authority and aristocratic rule did not undermine the centrality of Jehovah, God of Promise, as the foundation of the Hebrew State. The contractual relationship between God and his people provided to the identity and continuity of the State a divine guarantee and reinforced the monopoly of Jerusalem priests among Israelites. This historical God has both political and military functions; the Messianic mission of the State and the series of healing prophecies, protected by the royal institution, suggest a new form of religious rationality (ibid.: 239–246). The Levite Torah and more specifically Deuteronomy reflect the complementarity of two significant parallel processes: the rationalization–legalization of religious ethics on the one hand and the theologization of law on the other (ibid.: 259).

While apophatic definitions of God and theosis are at the core of Eastern Orthodoxy, cataphatic manifestations of God through prophecy and rational religious instruction define Judaism (ibid.: 318). The reign of King Jeroboam II indicated that the prophets were the spiritual protectors of the Jewish people from divine revenge; and that the localization of God in Jerusalem provided the basis for their political legitimacy and therefore intervention into State affairs (ibid.: 319–326). Jewish eschatology is fulfilled with the arrival of Messiah. Christian Apocalypse is completed with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.
The differences in the sectarian organization of the Pharisees and the Essenes imply two inconclusive yet radically different visions of the image of God and its reflections on bureaucracy. The Pharisees centered their definition of authority on the Rabbi’s charismatic leadership, underscored the distinction between material and spiritual goods and provided the resources for religious law enforcement in the public sphere (ibid.: 401–430). The Essenes were by nature pacifist, indifferent to any form of secular authority and focused on the idea of purity, both corporeal and spiritual (ibid.). Hence, the Pharisees fostered the rationalization of Judaism and transformed it into a moral critique vis-à-vis the State. If sin constitutes a breach of contractual obligation toward God, which inflicts exile and undermines the survival of the State, then military readiness and adherence to divine law are two essential preconditions for the perpetuation of Judaism as both a political and a religious structure. The Platonic elements in the philosophy and administrative organization of the Essenes prioritized the collective over the individual, a principle that was not foundational in Pharisean ethics. The latter treated individual punishment as necessary for the avoidance of collective punishment by God and used religious norms much more as key policy instruments that would prevent State arbitrariness and increase collective welfare. While compliance rents are enjoyed collectively, punishment and reputation costs are carried individually by each member of the collective.

Byzantine caesaropapism means that the dogmatic, administrative, and spiritual aspects of the Church are regulated at the highest level by the Emperor; the performance of religious functions and duties by the imperial institution confirms the notion that the Empire is the reflection of the Divine Kingdom on earth (Weber, 1980: 688–727). Weber argues that the State co-opts the Church and transforms it into a government institution. The tradeoff between the ruler and the Church consists of the following exchange: taxes and subsistence means supplied to the State by the Church as well as recognition by the State of the Church’s right to define autonomously its internal organization and the moral disciplining of its subjects (ibid.). Moreover, he points out that in the medieval Orient Orthodox monasteries were central in international economic transactions and thus a significant source of tax revenue for the State; at the same time, he draws analogies between the Byzantine Empire and the Islamic Caliphate (ibid.). The waqf institution in the Caliphate served as a revenue-increasing mechanism for the government in the same way that Byzantine monasteries accumulated taxable capital, which reinforced the State treasury. In the Weberian models of Orthodoxy and Islam, the State uses religion in order to maximize its income base, gain more legitimacy in the eyes of the masses, and expand its bureaucratic apparatus and thus
its monitoring capacity over society. Thus, Weber treats religions as *instrumental institutions* that facilitate public policy objectives. Caesaropapist States – Christian or Muslim – are rational, in that sense, because they subordinate religious structures to their own material interests.

Individual ideas can be transformed to collective values through religion. Weber’s Protestant Ethic provides a developmental history of Western capitalism derived from the economic ethics of the Reformation and its asceticism, as this is reflected in the private sector of 19th-century Germany, Western Europe, and the United States (Schluchter, 1985: 27–29). If rationalism can be culturally bounded, then religious values can be synthesized into norms only when the last stage of this evolutionary process is complete: political domination, or, more simply put, state formation or state consolidation. Thus, a set of instrumental religious values can lead to the emergence of different, yet rational, states through the provision of economic incentives to individuals. There are two first-order conclusions to be drawn from this. First, the dialectical method can provide an eloquent explanation of Weber’s theory on politics, religion, and the economy. Second, Protestantism in its various forms – Lutheranism, Calvinism, Baptism, or Methodism – is a key explanatory factor of capitalist development and by extension the formation of rational–legal regimes, constrained by the rule of law.

What is interesting is that Weber does not produce a theory for nondemocratic, nonrepresentative political economies. His analysis on Taoism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, ancient Judaism, and ancient Christianity is defined not by an intention to explain why Eastern religions do not lead to political and economic outcomes similar to the West; on the contrary, he provides four criteria that amplify the logic of his religious typology: (1) The difference between the world and the back- or *hinterworld*; (2) What *hinterworld* means and whether it is cosmocentric or theocentric; (3) Incentives for good deeds in current life (imminent reward or redemption in the hinterworld); and (4) The soteriology of the individual either through character discipline (*Bildung*) or mystic/ascetic self-perfection (ibid.: 92–93).

Religion has been important in human history, because it has been the only convincing or partially convincing response to the mystery of life and death. If the current world is a preparation stage of finite horizon for the *hinterworld*, whose horizon is infinite, then religion facilitates the transition from one stage to the other. This is why bureaucracy as religious structure matters: because the State has to reflect the values of the *hinterworld* in order to convince its citizens about the ethics of its economic and political mission in the current world. Weber suggests that there are three types of bureaucratic domination: (1) Public finance and technical expertise,
(2) Bureaucratic monitoring, and (3) Political control of the bureaucracy (ibid.: 348–354). Capitalism and modern finance are more likely to thrive under the first two types of bureaucratic domination and less likely under the third. This is why the question of correspondence between political regimes, agency structures, and religious norms is important. Because the three main monotheistic religions of the East – Eastern Orthodoxy, Judaism, and Islam – provide not only the guidelines for the spiritual relationship between the human and the divine, but also the institutional framework for the relationship of citizens with their bureaucracy, of political leaders with their citizen-clients.

1.4 HIERARCHIES

Definitions of the sacred and the profane imply a critical distinction between religious and secular modes of collective life. Émile Durkheim (2012) in his *Elementary Forms of Religious Life: The Totemic System in*
Australia presents his theory on the microfoundations of social organization and treats religion as a series of identity-advancing collective representations of beliefs and values (Pickering, 1984: 79–81). The very use of ethnographic method for the interpretation of religious phenomena in non-advanced and more specifically in primitive societies reveals Durkheim’s originalist predisposition; religion is not defined only negatively in terms of prohibitions and moral threats, but also positively in terms of rituals that preserve the significance and continuity of the cult (ibid.: 86). The binary nature of the sacred makes relevant a distinction between cognitive areas of purity and impurity in society. Durkheim is convinced that there are different forms of correspondence between the sacred and the profane, as his perceived duality of human nature suggests. The temporal and spatial analysis of the sacred and the profane amplifies the separation between the two; liturgical rites cannot coexist with profane customs, and this separation has to also be physical and symbolic (ibid.: 141). The social world depends equally on these two dimensions, according to Durkheim; contrary to his definition of the sacred, he is less clear about the profane. The latter is basically the residual space left by the sacred; its definition is negative.

My review of Durkheim criticizes his distinction between the sacred and the profane, following the line of critics against the separability of the sacred from the profane. I am convinced that it is not possible to treat the profane as completely separable from the sacred, a socio-political space of finite horizon, devoid of any concrete rules of divine origin. The use of symbolic means for the achievement of functionalist outcomes makes the dichotomy between the sacred and the profane even more problematic. Durkheim’s theory of separability between the sacred and the profane corresponds to a meta-Christian view of religion, which reflects the duality in the nature of Jesus Christ and the heretic controversies on the superiority of his divine or human nature. If society has sacred origins and the existence of profane life is an outcome of compromise between normative priors and material interests shaping the human condition, then 19th-century French secularism can be clearly seen through the prism of this separability. According to Durkheim, secularism is not opposing religion, but simply draws the lines between the sacred and the profane and thus allows religion to develop freely and independently within its own temporal, spatial, and material constraints. Moreover, he justifies the primacy of the sacred over the profane by arguing that the notion of sacred is not limited only to ecclesiastical or religious practices. He claims that religion and science have a sequential rather than contradictory relationship; the treatment of society as sacred and the identification of isomorphic patterns between religious practice and social interaction show
that religion is not a legitimacy mechanism for a hierarchical God but a set of nonhierarchical rules that facilitates horizontal communities (Stirrat, 1984: 200). Society from an evolutionary standpoint is a projection of religious norms; the difference between world religions and the practice of religion in Africa is that in the former case the notion of the sacred is defined by saints and gods, whereas in the latter it is by religious community development (ibid.: 203–207). The State is certainly not Durkheim’s locus of analysis. Nevertheless, it may be underscored that the State per se can be categorized as a higher-order form of political community, an advanced structure that includes the values and norms of religion.

Becker (1950: 363–364) suggests that the notion of the profane is wider than the notion of the secular; the criterion for the distinction between sacred and secular societies is the degree of permeability of any society’s value system. He assumes that value systems in sacred societies are static, whereas in secular societies they are dynamic. Hence, secular societies were societies that were initially sacred but changed. The notion of secular implies a determinate opposition against religious institutions, and is part of the broader profane space. His reference to *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas in order to establish religious continuity through prescribed norms reveals a simplistic yet mainstream notion of religion in social development (ibid.: 370). Religion is observed as an establishment institution, a group of disincentives to modernization and social openness. It is clear that the Durkheimian model considers religion as a structure only within the spatial and functional boundaries of the sacred. The distinction between secular and sacred societies roughly corresponds to the political economy distinction between development and underdevelopment. While religion shapes the roots of any social system, its definition as sacred or secular depends on its functional distance from those original religious norms that brought it into existence.

To avoid the danger of entering into a counterproductive enterprise of definitions and sociological controversies, which are not the focus of this book, it is essential to point out that religion in Durkheim, when it comes to the State, is ideologically neutral, with a normative core and positive extensions. The body of the religious community is formed through ceremonial processes and the accumulation of private cults into a commonly accepted collective; religion is the formative element of social relationships, and provides a basis for the common understanding of situations and things (Goody, 1961: 148). It is exactly this promotion of social stability and solidarity that makes religion in the Durkheimian model rational; societies are rational because they have religious roots. Durkheim treats that as a reality rather than as a normative preference. This is why he affirms that society is a moral community, whose existence is determined by the transcendent
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1.5 SYNTHESIS

The book argues that there are strong linkages between religion, bureaucratic organization, citizen preferences, and political regimes. Before providing the formal analysis and empirical evidence to back those linkages, I
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would like to engage in a short theoretic discussion about them here. In this chapter, I have discussed the views of Lipset and Rokkan, Marx, Lukács, Marcuse, Adorno, Weber, and Durkheim. I have also provided some initial thoughts on the views to be developed in the next chapter of this book. The choice of these thinkers relates to the three grand themes that I intend to discuss. First, I analyze the linkage between religion and political regimes in terms of social welfare expectations by the electorate, surveillance incentives, and collectivist distribution by bureaucrats. Particularly when it comes to the Russian case, if the monastery constitutes the core of Orthodoxy as a paradigmatic administrative structure, then subnational government is certainly the microcosm of the Soviet and post-Soviet administrative state. At the same time, Marxian political economy is treated as the necessary linkage between the Russian administrative agency of the 21st century and the Byzantine monastery of the 11th century. The apophatic definitions of God in the philosophy of Gregory Palamas and the Hesychast movement are linked with Marxist dialectics and Adorno’s cognitive definition of mimesis as a form of self-preservation and thus autonomy (Benhabib, 1986).

Second, religious traditions shape the administrative structures of local or regional communities. In Russia, whose federal structures render the third or even the fourth level of government (municipality and city district respectively) devoid of sufficient financial resources, oblast administrations are much more important than municipal or district administrations in decision-making autonomy and mimesis of religious collectives. In Israel, a centralized government characterized by a Jewish majority and an Arab minority, Jewish and particularly Arab local authorities are the only administrative units, which are likely to reflect the religious values of their citizens and preserve distinctive rules of decision-making when it comes to the distribution of public goods. Different levels of policy discretion, administrative monitoring, and centralization correspond to different sets of religious norms adopted by citizens and bureaucrats.

The dichotomy between homogenous and diverse societies is very interesting here. The Russian cities that I have covered in my fieldwork – Lipetsk, Krasnodar, Sochi, Tomsk, and Novosibirsk – are all regional capitals with the exception of Sochi. Moreover, all these cities are Eastern Orthodox by majority and are not defined from a political or economic standpoint by the existence of a major ethnic or religious minority. Of course, the Armenian and Georgian communities are pretty strong in Krasnodar and Sochi, but their respective Oriental and Eastern Orthodox traditions did not create much of a difference for the purpose of my study. Lipetsk embodies the heartland of Eastern Orthodox Slavic peasantry as this has been depicted in the novels of...
Dostoevsky, Chekhov, and Tolstoy. Krasnodar reflects the Russian and Soviet versions of Caucasus cosmopolitanism, and Sochi the model of economic development adopted by Putin’s regime. Tomsk and Novosibirsk, the Siberian equivalents of Saint Petersburg and Moscow, present the future of Russia in terms of technology, innovation, and administrative development.

Netanya in Israel’s central district is the urban expression of Jewish cosmopolitanism inside the boundaries of the Jewish State and is home to all major innovation and investment initiatives originating from the San Francisco Bay Area and other technology hubs of the world. Nazareth, the largest Arab city in Israel and one of the holiest places in Christianity, is a mixed urban space composed two-thirds of Muslims and one third of Christians, primarily Eastern Orthodox. In that sense, it is a unique representation of Israel’s Arab sector, both from an administrative and a cultural perspective.

Are some religions more collectivist than others? And, thus, are their respective administrative equivalents more distributive, or, simply put, more efficient in the provision of local public goods? It is obvious that I do not treat religion as a social cleavage or secularism as a valid or even existing form of State organization. The formal separation between the Church and the State in 19th-century France or the abolition of the Caliphate in Turkey by Ataturk in 1923 did not eliminate the administrative traditions of Catholicism and Sunni Islam in French and Turkish societies respectively. This perpetuation of those norms is much more evident at the local rather than the central level of government for two reasons: (1) Local governments capture religious diversity whereas central governments capture only the religious preferences of the majority; (2) It is much easier to monitor state capacity and effectiveness in the provision of public goods at the local rather than the central level.

In this book, I fill a gap in Max Weber’s sociology of religion by analyzing Christianity, Judaism, and Islam as national and subnational State cultures. If the historical divide between East and West, Islam and Protestantism, is a divide between collectivist bureaucrats and individualist entrepreneurs, then I argue that Judaism is a median religion, while Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism are closer to Islam and Protestantism respectively. There is an ordinal hierarchy when it comes to religious degrees of collectivism: Islam > Eastern Orthodoxy > Roman Catholicism > Judaism > Protestantism. Thus, the causal mechanism that I suggest has the following form: Religious norms → citizen demand for public goods → the leader’s modernization strategy → regime outcome. Hence, multiple regime outcomes are derived per religion: public sector (Byzantine) oligarchy in Eastern Orthodoxy, liberal or social democracy in Protestantism,
State corporatism or clientelism in Roman Catholicism, entrepreneurial aristocracy in Islam, and fragmented democracy in Judaism.

NOTES


2. For an empirical study that shows the statistical insignificance of Eastern Orthodoxy when it comes to Russian authoritarism in the 2000s, see Fish (2005).

REFERENCES


