

BOOK REVIEW/COMPTE RENDU

Jonathan Fox, *A World Survey of Religion and the State*. Cambridge Studies in Social Theory, Religion, and Politics. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008, 400 pp. \$US 29.99 paper (978-0-521-70758-9), \$US 85.00 hardcover (978-0-521-88131-9)

Offering a fresh look at the secularization debate, *A World Survey of Religion and the State* provides a broad-based empirical study measuring levels of government intervention in religion across the globe. Drawing on data gleaned from the Religion and State Project, which analyzes government intervention in religion (GIR) in 175 countries from 1990–2002, Fox systematically illustrates the increasing significance of religion as it relates to the state. His research offers an important comparative analysis of government intervention in religion among six categories of state — those falling within Western democracies, the former Soviet Bloc, Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America. The study's findings illustrate increasing GIR activity on a global scale, with many variations within and among state groupings.

Early in this work, Fox outlines the secularization debate with a review of political science literature on this topic. He subsequently enters the discussion by asking questions about the extent to which governments have intervened in religion during the 1990–2002 timeframe, and whether this 13-year time period saw an increase or decrease in this phenomenon. Fox measures government intervention in religion (GIR) by looking at levels of *religious discrimination*, *religious regulation*, and *religious legislation* within each state in the dataset and compares findings within and between regions. This ambitious study offers empirical evidence that governments are increasingly involved in supporting or suppressing religion within their borders.

Fox persuasively identifies a series of patterns in GIR outcomes among regional groupings of states and among religious affiliations while stressing that discrepancies exist within each region. He also points out differences in GIR behaviour between local and national governments, indicating that state policies regarding religion are not always observed by its citizens. One finding of interest is that former Soviet bloc countries exhibited a rise in state-sponsored protection of indigenous religions following the collapse of communism, as religion emerged as a

strong component of national identity. Muslim-majority states showed high and increasing levels of GIR, especially in the area of religious regulation. Fox suggests that this trend can be attributed to the rise in militant Islamic fundamentalism, which challenges the legitimacy of the state. Of great interest was his discovery that across all states within the study, including thriving democracies, relatively few demonstrated a substantial separation of church and state. The potent role played by religion, as it relates to the public sphere, is well documented in Fox's work.

While this particular macro-level analysis of religion and the state can be placed firmly in the field of political science, it has great utility for sociologists studying religion. Fox's findings not only repudiate the secularization theory of sociologists such as Steve Bruce, they simultaneously lend legitimacy to the works of Berger, Martin, Davie, and Casanova who provide relevant explanations of why the modern world remains vibrantly religious. It is puzzling that Fox sidesteps significant sociological studies making claims about the resurgence of religion in public life. Instead, he provides a critique of sociological studies on church-state relations by arguing that religious behaviour and belief are difficult variables to quantify. One might take exception to this argument. For example, sociological studies of religious behaviour and belief by author Grace Davie and Peter Berger provide relevant data illuminating both how and why differences emerged between Europe and the United States. This level of detail is more difficult to achieve with a large dataset that is broader than it is deep. Sociologists might grumble about Fox's focus on institutional behaviour at the expense of inter- and intragroup dynamics; it nonetheless provides a relevant piece of the puzzle to the larger picture of the global religious economy.

Fox's quantitative work on church-state relations provides a breadth of detail on the topic that is unprecedented. By offering a comparison of 175 countries within 6 different groupings, this study is exceptionally useful in understanding regional peculiarities in church-state behaviour. By placing the rise in GIR within an historical context, Fox illuminates social and political variables contributing to the rise in GIR over 13 years. This includes issues such as geopolitical changes, rising nationalism, and politicized religion in the Soviet Bloc and the Middle East. *A World Survey of Religion and the State* beckons toward increased dialogue between the disciplines of political science and sociology and illustrates the efficacy of varying levels of analysis in illuminating the church-state dynamic.

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time of unprecedented historical change while living in Russia and the former Yugoslavia between 1990 and 1998. She subsequently joined Peter Berger at the Institute on Culture, Religion, and World Affairs at Boston University as an Earhart Fellow, specializing in the sociology of religion, ethnic and religious identity, nationalism, and immigration. Her doctoral research addresses immigrant identity maintenance and the role religious and cultural institutions play in that process.

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