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# 1 Introduction

## Western European modernities and religion – a perspective from political sociology

*François Foret and Xabier Itçaina*

In September 2010, Karel De Gucht, the European Commissioner in charge of trade and a former Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs, caused an international controversy. He evoked the influence of the Jewish lobby on American diplomacy in the Middle East and the difficulty of having a rational discussion about Israel even with moderate Jewish people. The European Jewish Congress protested and asked for apologies. Commentators denounced the racist view expressed by De Gucht and the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe. Others defended the right to criticize political actors and sovereign countries in the name of freedom of expression.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, in the US in summer 2010, a Baptist pastor of a tiny religious community in Florida created a media hysteria by proclaiming his intention to burn a Koran to ‘celebrate’ September 11 and to oppose the Islamist threat all over the world.<sup>2</sup> Dominant criticisms called for mutual respect between denominations and rang alarm bells about the geopolitical consequences of this kind of discourse on the international image of the US.

These anecdotes, along with many others, exemplify the dynamics of clashes between religion and politics in contemporary world affairs. The same issues and patterns of conflict are repeating themselves. On the one hand, there is disagreement on the place of religion in decision-making and the possibility of each denomination complying with the rules of participatory democracy and adopting reasoned public language. On the other hand, questions are asked about the identity attributed to or claimed by social groups on religious grounds, and the balance to be found between mutual recognition of particularisms and freedom of expression. These stories also highlight the porosity between national, European and global politics and the fact that clashes are now not so much religious in content as symbolic and political.

The challenge is to find suitable analytical frameworks to tackle this re-emergence of religion. The danger is either exactly reproducing the readings inherited from the past or, on the contrary, being seduced by short-sighted interpretations which assert the radical novelty of post-modern phenomena. The collective ambition of this book is to search for a middle way by reassessing social science’s classic approaches in the light of socio-political change. The purpose is not to develop a unified method to standardized case studies, but rather to cross

various theoretical and empirical perspectives in order to develop a possible common toolbox.

In recent scientific literature, the debate over the interactions between politics and religion is framed first by discussion of the theory of ‘multiple modernities’ as implemented theoretically and empirically in Western Europe. The ‘multiple modernities’ option is to be understood here as a heuristic and flexible perspective rather than as a deterministic toolbox. The purpose is to emphasize pluralistic, competitive and open-ended social processes at work in Europe today, religious change being one of these processes, in interaction with others. Second, looking at the broad picture, notably by briefly situating our approach with reference to comparative politics, international relations and theology, is one way of discussing the – relative – exceptionalism of religion as an issue for political science. As a consequence, we propose to concentrate in the third place on the double nature of secularization (as a resource *and* a constraint) for religious and political actors in Western Europe, understood here as a multilevel system of interaction between national and supranational levels. Finally, these three theoretical and methodological choices lead us to shape this book around four understandings of European modernities.

### **Theoretical background: religion and multiple modernities in Europe**

The theory of ‘multiple modernities’ is a leading paradigm in contemporary analysis of relationships between politics and religion. In short, the idea is that several roads to modernity may be found, apart from that followed in Europe, which is associated with secularization. Different traditions/societies/groups can come to terms with the components of modernity (capitalism, democracy, human rights, science and reason) while keeping in touch with their religious background, faith and practice. Western modernity is a large and flexible pattern, which may in some cases be selectively adopted and transformed to fit the context. Various different versions of Western modernity may coexist and/or lead to tensions.

Many ‘multiple modernities’ approaches draw on Eisenstadt (2000), holding that the best way to understand the modern world is to see it as a story of continual resetting of numerous cultural programmes. These new settings emerge as the result of endless encounters on the part of both individuals and groups, all of whom are engaged in the creation and re-creation of both cultural and institutional formations within different economic and cultural contexts.

The theory of ‘multiple modernities’ has mainly been used to suggest that secularized Europe does not offer a deterministic path which other modernizing societies are condemned to follow. Alfred Stepan (2001) emphasizes that a strict separation between the secular and the sacred is not the dominant paradigm in Western democracies and is found still less often in the rest of the world. He thus qualifies the mandatory association between secularism, modernity and democracy. He proposes the concept of ‘multiple secularisms’ to illuminate the

variants existing in many countries which have achieved democracy in order to organize the coexistence of religion and politics. The idea of ‘twin tolerations’ requiring that the political and the religious fields leave each other enough space to function freely may be more accurate than the dogma of separation. Stepan’s approach is an illustration of the extent to which the notion of multiple modernities can be used to question the link between modernization and secularization, as well as the exclusive nature of the European road towards democracy.

In recent years it has been suggested that not only has this secularized Europe been and will remain an exception, but that this exception is likely to be challenged by ‘multiple modernizations’ *from inside*. On the one hand, past and future enlargements of the European Union and immigration have brought populations with a higher level of religiosity into the integration process (Byrnes and Katzenstein 2006). On the other hand, comparison with the US shows the sustainability and vitality of a mature democracy which is friendly towards religion (Berger, Davie and Fokas 2008). Many well-known American authors with strong normative positions have suggested that Europe should take inspiration from the US and integrate religion into public affairs, while at the same time preserving the separation between Church and state (Jenkins 2007; Weigel 2005; Weiler 2007). Europe should go beyond the classical idea of secularization – in the (narrow) sense that modernity is eradicating religion – and develop a post-secular model where citizens are allowed to live and express their faith peacefully. This echoes, from a very different intellectual origin, the call by Habermas for a post-secular regime where secular citizens would have to learn how to live with religion in the public sphere in order to balance the adaptation already made by religious citizens as they comply with the expectations of democratic citizenship in a secular environment. This comparison between the US and Europe is a way of speculating on the latter’s future. Differences between American and European histories are nevertheless significant: in Europe, religion is still closely associated with the state, even if under very different modalities (see Portier in this volume). It is thus necessary to pay attention to what is partly replacing and partly furthering and reinforcing the state, namely the EU.

The theory of ‘multiple modernities’ is a stimulating intellectual framework for investigating the new salience of religion within contemporary European politics, together with the range and modalities of secularization. However, it was initially formulated for the purpose of a comparison between Western and non-Western realities, and has only recently been applied more specifically to intra-Western and above all intra-European comparisons. The ‘multiple modernities’ paradigm was developed within the sociology of international relations and uses categories for the definition of social and cultural data which are sometimes broad and reified due to the need to reduce complexity. This paradigm (1) has not been always been subjected to empirical verification; (2) has rarely been tested with close attention to the domestic logics of national *and* intra-national fields; (3) has almost never been linked to an in-depth study of specific settings and practices of European integration. Relying as it does on the rich legacy of

the ‘multiple modernities’ school whilst acknowledging its silences and lacunae, this volume aims to contribute to the debate.

This book’s fundamental choice has been to narrow the geographical scope of its research in order to be able to go into concrete details. The purpose is to focus on Western Europe, which is generally seen as the matrix for the dominant version of modernity. In these territories, where state, capitalism and rationalization were ‘invented’ and have been through a long domestic history, to what extent and under what forms can we observe the coexistence of multiple modernities? Western Europe is also host to founding and long-standing member states of the European Union. These countries are those most impregnated by the secularism allegedly induced by European integration. Choosing not to include new member states in our analysis is a radical self-limitation, but it will enable serious treatment of the long-term effects on national societies of Brussels politics and policy-making.

The constant risk of the ‘multiple modernities’ perspective is that of dilution into a too general and abstract perspective. One way of circumscribing the scope of research is to define a limited object, for example a sectoral policy where several religious logics and inferences can be observed. Such an approach is exemplified by recent analyses of the impact of religion on national welfare states and its possible subsequent influence on the emergence of European welfare (Bäckström and Davie 2010; van Kersbergen and Manow 2009). Several contributions in the book rely on a similar self-limitation by focusing on a specific issue (migration, new religious movements), on party politics, or on certain forms of political mobilization.

This internal use of ‘multiple modernities’ leads in part to the constantly relaunched debate on secularization. The central questions in the ‘view from the outside’ are the following: ‘Is secularization intrinsic or extrinsic to the modernization process? Is Europe secular because it is modern, or is it secular because it is European and has developed along a distinctive pathway unlikely to be repeated elsewhere?’ (Berger *et al.* 2008: 64).

This book also poses other questions in order to address this issue. First, to what extent is European modernity secularized? The role played by religion in the production of European modernity has to be documented. Second, has the European modernity intrinsically produced a renewal of religion under new forms and with new meanings, adapted to participatory democracy and the regulatory state, i.e. the two contemporary settings of domination and agency at national and supranational levels? If the answer to these two questions is yes, this would mean not only that ‘multiple modernities’ in Europe can actually be acknowledged, but also that European modernity has never ceased to be multiple.

In other words, the call for a new ‘post-secular’ Europe may underestimate the historical diversity and flexibility of Western modernity at home, while paradoxically celebrating these qualities on foreign soils. Current developments would then appear as *maximizations of the characteristics of modernity (a kind of ‘ultra-modernity’) rather than alternatives.*

## Religion as a legitimate object for political sociology

An approach in terms of ‘multiple modernities’ has the advantage of emphasizing plurality at work in societies and restoring – at least theoretically, if not often empirically – the ‘thickness’ of the social within the analysis. Recent converging approaches in various subfields of political science and beyond, for example in comparative politics and international relations, have updated and deepened this kind of perspective without necessarily using the thesis of ‘multiple modernities’ as a matrix. This is a way of discussing the specificity of religion as an object for political science, and subsequently the opportunity to mobilize (or not) specialized knowledge such as theology.

In comparative politics, understanding of modernization, democratization and Europeanization is most often focused on economic determinations and institutional processes, following the literature on institution- and community-building in the 1960s and 1970s and the mainstream liberal view of democracy. Culture is seen at best as a background, a supportive raw material for stable and cooperative democratic settings. The individual is the core element in this reasoning, as well as the citizen whose consent is crucial for the sustainability of the political order. But this citizen is considered to be an ‘unencumbered self’, and the structuring role of the individual’s communities of belonging in framing his or her preferences and identities is frequently ignored. The silence of liberalism on these questions of cultural diversity and the myth of ethno-cultural neutrality has been criticized by republicanism and communitarianism; meanwhile, the destructive but also reshaping role of ‘tribalism’ – closed collective identities – in the overthrow of totalitarianisms and the rebuilding of social ties in new Eastern European democracies has been underlined. Following Waltzer, what is suggested is that a certain level of particularization of democracy is required in order to render it meaningful to its citizens (Blokker 2008: 170). This approach in terms of ‘multiple democracies’, which has been developed in particular around the *European Journal of Social Theory*, has the advantage of insisting on three points. First, norms which are normatively universal are always implemented in specific situations and must be related to the actual experience of people. Second, this means that the nature of democracy is by essence contestable, and there is a permanent political struggle to provisionally institutionalize one version of democracy which is likely to be challenged in the near future. Third, and as a consequence, one should remain open to new and innovative interpretations of democracy since nothing is written in stone and because there is neither any historical determinism for a particular society nor any unilateral evolutionism towards a single model (Blokker 2008: 174–5). This keeps open the articulation of post-national and Europeanized democratic practices with existing and resilient national political cultures. It is also an invitation to prefer approaches aiming at understanding democracy through the study of indigenous mobilizations of cultural repertoires and ethics rather than through atemporal, predefined models diffused in successive waves around the world. In this endeavour, the particular event regains all its importance, the moment of change

when a transformative experience occurs and when long-standing trends rooted in the past political order produce new forms of domination under the influence of contingent circumstances (Wydra 2007: 7).

The same concern to take on board plurality, and especially religion, is tangible in international relations (IR).<sup>3</sup> In a recent stimulating overview of the IR literature, Ron E. Hassner (forthcoming) denounces what he sees as a systematic bias against religion by secularist political scientists. This no longer leads to ignoring religion, as before 9/11, but to an ill-informed or prejudiced view. Those political scientists who address religion take the ‘high road’, focusing on political, economical issues as key variables and essentializing religion as a global and deterministic factor in order to explain its influence without documenting the ways in which this influence can produce effects. Another marginal specialized trend consists of the ‘low road’, the analysis of a particular religious movement or of the impact of religion on a particular region, without any generalization to the international sphere (as in the series of volumes on fundamentalism edited by Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby between 1993 and 2004 at the University of Chicago Press). Between these two options, Hassner promotes a third one, ‘thick religion’, which involves both a comprehension of theology, religious organization, rituals and beliefs and also an ambition to generalize from particular instances to reach global conclusions for international relations.

When looking for issues where religion and international affairs interact, we need to go beyond the simple use of religious identities of states to explain patterns of conflicts and cooperation (as in Fox and Sandler 2006 and Norris and Inglehart 2004) to show where the religious label comes from, and how the presence of a dominant religious group, a religiously influenced constitution or the piety of leaders shapes the outcomes. Ultimately, the claim to be made for this research is the establishment of a causal link between the role of religion and outcomes in international politics. The interpretative and interdisciplinary methodology proposed by Hassner’s ‘thick religion’ is congruent with the attempt in this book to take religion seriously in European affairs and to integrate it as an entire parameter for understanding the global political picture. Two significant differences may however be stated. On the one hand, the European Union is now a political system in itself – even if secondary and incomplete – which cannot be understood under the sole prism of ordinary international relations, but calls for a close understanding of its internal and indigenous logics. On the other hand, the question is to know how ‘thick’ the religion which is the object of study must be. Extreme views consider that religion can be understood only by means of religious categories, as secular social sciences cannot grasp the founding externality of faith which transcends rationality; or, alternatively, that religion is now so diffuse and weak that it exists only in the eye of the researcher anxious to find religious traces in human behaviour where there is only society and culture (see respectively Trigano and Michel in *Revue du Mauss* 2003; Capelle-Pogăcean *et al.* 2008). The path chosen here is a middle way. Religion is conceived as a living memory (Hervieu-Léger 1993) and a still-influential affiliation, however mediated and individualized it may have become. But religion is not to

be understood in religious categories. The content of faith matters only to the extent that it produces social effects: faith itself is a social construction and religious actors, roles and meanings exist as part of and products of social relationships. This is the reason why theology per se is left to one side in this volume.

Theology is itself divided in its relationship to European modernity. There are theologies rather than a theology (Lesch forthcoming). Christianity is said to have been a pioneer through the internal experience of ecumenism, but Christian theology is itself shared in different trends, as exemplified by the Anglo-American so-called 'public theology'. One approach (Tracy 1981) promotes a theology aiming at scientificity and broken down into several branches in order to target different audiences: a fundamental theology looking for the alliance between reason and faith as well as universality and full integration within academia; a systematic theology working at the rebuilding of tradition and hosted by the Church; a practical theology offering incentives for solidarity and engagement with the general public. Other approaches (D'Costa 2005) define theology as a quasi-missionary work whose purpose is to influence elites and society in favour of religion. Christian hierarchies may prefer this last option, but the acceptance of diversity and a certain relativism is a non-negotiable precondition for the viability of theology within the public sphere. A Christian theologian often has no choice, as he is asked in his role as an expert to interpret multicultural issues and he cannot refuse to play this role without considerable opportunity costs and the risk of marginalization. This context, together with the decline of religious universes, also explains why the structuring references of theology come frequently from outside the discipline: today, Habermas may be considered a Father of the Church. The quest for recognition as a scientific discipline or a public voice is of varying difficulty according to the country, and theologians are often obliged to borrow other identities (such as philosopher or historian) and adopt the language of reason in order to participate in research programmes or seminars. On this condition, their input is often valuable and it is under this form that it appears in several parts of this volume.

If one is required, a further justification for political sociologists' interest in religious matters comes from the fact that analysing religion can be an opportunity for empirical testing the major theoretical controversies within the sub-discipline. As a significant illustration, the political behaviour of religious actors can be alternatively scrutinized by each of the distinct versions of neo-institutionalism. Following a rational choice path would mean, for instance, considering churches in the first place as interest groups competing in religious *and* political 'markets', and analysing their relations with political parties or with EU institutions as purely strategic accounts. Alternatively, an approach influenced by both historical and constructivist neo-institutionalism would try to strike a balance between strategic factors and historical and cultural ones, both of which play a crucial role in the case of the religious institutions (Warner 2000). Most of the contributions gathered in this volume follow this second path, without neglecting the strategic dimension of the political behaviour of churches and denominations



## **Empirical consequences: secularization as a constraint and an opportunity in Western Europe**

At the empirical level, we postulate that the secularization of Western European politics, policies and society not only creates new constraints but also new opportunity structures for religious bodies *and* for political actors. It provokes increased political activism from religious actors, more in the form of lobbies and testimonies than as authorities, and in return a remobilization of political institutions on religious issues. Far from being entirely confined to the private sphere, religion plays a significant and renewed role in the European public sphere, not only as an ‘identity resource’, an ‘ethical reference’ and a ‘provider of ritual’ (Voyé 2006), but also as a *relevant institutional player* within various policy networks and political settings.

In Western Europe, this renewal can only be understood if the *national dynamics and processes of European integration are considered together*. The EU appears both as an archetypal product and a catalyst of political and socio-economic modernity. The emergent supranational level has a growing autonomous logic and influence but remains definitely secondary to national powers and determined by the same societal trends. The nation-state remains the relevant level where controversies about the public regulation of religions take place and are framed. The ‘revival’ of denominational powers within national arenas – for instance, in Southern Europe (see Díaz-Salazar 2006; Garelli 2006) – testifies to two complementary dynamics: a very slow and progressive convergence of national models of public regulation of religions, and the still prevalent role of inherited socio-historical patterns of relations between churches, state and party systems. In Western European countries, which are the first subjects of this book, most bodies representing religions generally accept liberal democracy and pluralism as a legitimate way of governing in the secularized political sphere. At the same time, these religious actors refuse to allow religion to be totally privatized: they still aim at influencing political debate by turning to either a deliberative (as opposed to majoritarian) conception of democracy which takes their specificity into account, or by adopting a more fundamentalist stance. In response, state apparatuses try to adapt their inherited model of Church–state relations to this new activism, and political parties are willing to reconsider their own religious heritage and their position towards religious issues. The same pattern can be found at EU level. Churches and faith or conviction communities are strengthening their presence in Brussels. One aim of this book is to explore both these institutional and non-institutional religious phenomena in their interaction with process of Europeanization experienced by member states.

Various issues exemplify the existence of a differentiated multilevel Western European pattern of political regulation of religions and religious regulation of politics. Religious actors and issues are directly or indirectly involved in a certain number of prominent public policy issues in contemporary Western European politics. These issues can be roughly categorized under two broad headings.

In the first place are those policy issues which are directly related to the material and symbolic interests of the religious institutions. At the top of this policy agenda is institutional regulation of European religious pluralism. This concerns not only the pluralism of the representation of religious groups to EU institutions (Massignon 2007) but also the institutionalization of the representation of religions, in particular Islam but also other minority religions with alternative visions of European modernity, in national arenas. Recent controversies around the *Conseil français du culte musulman* in France or around the representation of Muslim organizations in Spain or in Italy testify to the high political sensitivity of this dimension. Organized religions are also directly concerned by reforms of educational policy, whether this concerns agreements between official state school systems and private denominational schools, or the sensitive issue of the teaching of religion within state schools. The Spanish debate on the Socialist Party's 2004–2005 reform of the Education Law previously adopted by the Popular Party provides an apt illustration of this point. Finally, religious actors are also concerned with more symbolic issues related to the presence of religious symbols – or symbols interpreted as religious – within the public sphere. All major religions are concerned by these controversies, which are good illustrations of how European, national and local levels interact. When, in November 2009, the European Court of Human Rights ruled against the use of crucifixes in Italian classrooms, this raised a general – and endless – debate not only about Italian national identity, but also about the role played by Christianity within the European identity. So did the April 2010 vote of Belgium's lower house of parliament in favour of a law which would ban women from wearing the full Islamic face veil in public. A similar ban was also voted in by the French Parliament in September 2010. Religious institutions can only react and mobilize when confronted by policies such as these which are directly linked to the public regulation of religions and religious issues.

Apart from this first set of issues, religious institutions are also highly reactive on other policy issues, thus generating a new political role in the public sphere. In fact, churches regularly voice their position on European and, to a great extent, national *social and family policies* (same-sex marriage, divorce, abortion), and on bioethics and research in genetics, etc. Churches thus still aim to appear as moral authorities in the public sphere, sometimes managing to mobilize huge movements. Despite what the above-mentioned example would suggest, this new public interventionism of churches in the secularized public sphere is not systematically oriented towards political conservatism. The focus on human rights can position religious actors alongside very different social movements and advocacy coalitions. *Immigration* is an issue where actors from Catholic or Protestant third-sector organizations have joined advocacy coalitions in favour of the rights of migrants, as well as left-wing social movements, trade unions and NGOs. The same phenomena can be observed with the issue of *ethno-territorial conflict*, which remains critical in some Western European countries. Church voices have regularly been critical of the Northern League's xenophobic and separatist discourse (Cartocci 1994; Ritaine 2005b). In Northern

Ireland, in a deeply politically and religiously divided society, some religious actors also played a crucial role in mediation, especially in preparations for the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, as well as in the implementation of this agreement by third-sector organizations (Bacon 2003). These mediation efforts by religious actors have been furthered by the EU's strong commitment to the peace process in Northern Ireland, notably through socio-economic development programmes and support to third-sector organizations (O'Dowd and McCall 2008). This mediation role played by religious actors – perhaps more than by religious institutions per se – is also to be found in the case of the Basque conflict (Itçaina 2010). In Scotland, the Church of Scotland's institutional autonomy has been a strong dimension of Scottish national identity. However, this autonomy in terms of employing and disciplining clergy has been the subject of a prominent court case, due to European harmonization of fundamental citizen rights in policy areas such as education and employment via the Treaty of Amsterdam (Steven 2008). Europeanization here accentuated the secularization process, but this is far from being the case for every sector at stake.

The above-mentioned distinction between policy issues which are directly related to the material and symbolic interests of the religious institutions and issues of general interest in which religious actors intervene oversimplifies, of course, a much more complex reality. In the Western European public spheres, one can hardly say that a given policy issue is a 'religious' or 'non-religious' one. A non-religious issue can turn into a religious one, and conversely. As an illustration, one can observe the multiple effects of immigration on the relationship between religion and politics in Europe. At the political level, *immigration* is a factor which causes both internal transformations of national inherited patterns and the emergence of ad-hoc EU regulations. At the religious level, immigration has changed the religious landscape of host societies, and, consequently, has contributed to questioning of national institutional Church–state arrangements and the still fuzzy supranational setting. Immigration does not necessarily have religious consequences, but the *politicization* of local controversies (places of worship, headscarf debates, etc.) can turn a societal and economic issue into a 'religious' one, both at national and European level. In Western European countries, these direct or indirect religious consequences of immigration constitute a long-standing factor in countries such as France, Germany and the UK. They are also emerging in Southern Western European countries such as Spain, Italy and Portugal, where the absence of stabilized national patterns of integration constitute both an obstacle (because of the absence of a consensual norm on national identity) and an advantage (by giving public authorities more room to manoeuvre) in dealing with these new politico-religious issues (Ritaine 2005). New population flows also constitute new opportunities for transnational religions, not only for new religious movements aiming at gaining new religious 'markets', but also as actors in European or global civil society. Immigration has been an opportunity for religious actors to strengthen their position in the public arena in contrast with political actors' continual dithering. This has notably been the case for the Protestant and Catholic Churches in the welfare sector and in their efforts

to welcome and support immigrants. In Italy, Spain and Portugal, the most active groups have been social action groups – such as the Catholic charity Caritas – or diocesan services which work directly with immigrants, thus acquiring real expertise in that domain. This kind of activism has led to ambivalent relations between religious actors and administrative authorities, ranging from competition to subsidiarity. Needless to say, this situation is specific neither to Southern Europe nor to the Catholic Church. In various national and continental environments, religious actors not only help migrants but are also led to take public positions publicly on this issue (Menjívar 2006). Religion thus interacts with politics but in a rather original way because of the social urgency of finding solutions to the immigration problem. Immigration can therefore be seen as a new opportunity for the major transnational religions – and for religious minorities (see Stöckl *et al.* in this volume for the case of Austria) – in their desire to acquire the status of major players in local, national and ‘global civil’ society (Casanova 1997). Going beyond the role of religions in welfare policies towards migrants, Michael Minkenberg (2007), working from a typology of specific migrant policies in 19 Western democracies, ponders the role of religious models, particularly the Catholic and Protestant Churches, in the shaping of immigration policies. Minkenberg’s main postulate is that the interaction between nation-building, religious traditions and Church–state relations influences the role of churches in immigration policy-making. As a secondary hypothesis, Minkenberg states that: first, the humanitarian activities of the Christian churches remain subordinated to national policy choices; second, the Catholic and Protestant approaches to immigration policy-making are not necessarily equivalent. On human rights issues such as the right of asylum, churches are often in opposition with the state. The significant influence of national environments on religious activism evidences the fact that national policies still prevail on questions pertaining to borders and citizenship in spite of the growing encroachment of the EU on such issues.

In sum, the example of immigration illustrates well our threefold research proposal in its empirical dimension. First, religious actors use secularization both as a constraint and an opportunity to adapt their political behaviour in a very efficient way. Second, this renewal of political activism from religious actors can only be understood if national dynamics and processes of European integration are considered together. Third, these interactions between religion and politics are submitted to a double Europeanization process (top-down through the ongoing interactions between national and EU immigration policies and bottom-up through the constitution of European advocacy coalitions, whether pro- or anti-migrant). Beyond the specific case of immigration, these two directions are taken into consideration in the organization of the present volume.

## **An outline of this book: European, national and alternative modernities**

These theoretical and methodological elements determine the outline of this book. In the first part, Foret and Itçaina (this chapter) and Haynes discuss the reality, extent and meaning of the return of religion within international and European affairs, from the standpoint of political sociology and comparative politics on the one hand, and from an international relations perspective on the other hand. Considering European modernity as a whole from the inside and outside, the authors acknowledge the religious change which is currently at work but reposition it in a long-term and comparative perspective in order to qualify the twin notions of European and religious exceptionalism.

More specifically, Haynes shows how the field of international relations addresses religion. He reminds us that religion had for long been absent from the analysis of modern world affairs. The recent perceived comeback of God, especially after the 1978–1979 Iran revolution, has reactivated awareness that modernity does not necessarily exclude the sacred, but rather involves differentiated relationships to it. Nevertheless, the main schools of international relations have difficulty in taking religious factors on board. Realism cannot conceive religion as a ‘hard’ determinant of power in foreign policy. For Marxism, religion is not significant in the underlying class conflicts which structure international politics. Liberal internationalism may include religious organizations in the category of those non-state actors who are increasingly crucial to the management of inter-dependences through negotiation and the search for compromise, but tends to consider them as specializing in some fields only, principally that of human rights. Constructivism is the most welcoming theoretical universe for religion, given its concern to understand the incentives for the behaviours of agents, but, again, religion appears as a second-order element.

Following this, Haynes applies theories of international relations to a case study, that of Turkey’s candidacy for membership of the EU. The difficulty of the Turkish application is twofold. First, it comes up against European societies’ worries about their relationships with the Muslim world and the integration of Muslim populations within Europe. Second, it questions the very nature of the European Union as a community of interests and/or values. Haynes defends the idea that it reinforces the necessary multiplicity of modernity performed by the project of European integration.

A second part focuses on European modernity as objectified and implemented by the European Union. Special attention is paid to the way religion, as a sectorial part of civil society, has adapted to the new context of European integration and interacted with the emergence of a new political order. Following Bartolini, the main question is to determine the place of religion in the global process of centre formation, system building and political structuring at the European level (Bartolini 2005). The temporal and spatial references of religions need to be compared with the boundaries and political agendas defined by the EU: the congruence is not obvious, and harmonization is progressive, possibly painful and in

some cases still to come. Religion plays a timid, conjectural and ambivalent role in the constitution of a communicational Europe defined as a community of trust and identification and as an area of exchange and shared meanings. Echoing other analyses of 'Europeanization from below' (Risse-Kapen *et al.* 2001; Herrmann *et al.* 2004), Europeanization of religion can be understood as the process through which religion both influences and is influenced by European integration. The EU can be viewed alternately as an incentive framework for or a constraint upon religious change. Something is happening in Brussels in terms of the development of networks and circulation of practices and references, but less is probably happening in terms of overlapping allegiances and identities, and the range and depth of this transformation is still too uncertain to permit diagnosis of the emergence of a vertical European order for the political regulation of religion.

Foret proposes a critical survey of the way in which mainstream theories and concepts of European integration can engage with religion. He insists on the necessity of going beyond the utilitarian bias of European studies (which is obvious for example in the idea of regulatory state justified only by its outputs) and of adapting categories developed for the nation-state. He promotes a predominantly intergovernmentalist view, due to the resilience of the national level in the regulation of religious affairs and the structuration of allegiances and values. Occasional sociability between religious leaders in Brussels and the reality of transnationalization do not mean that a unified world-view linking faith and national belongings is in the making. Foret depicts the conservative effect of the EU as a consociation of states aiming at organizing unity in diversity, and thus institutionalizing this diversity. He acknowledges the potential role of religion as a personal inspiration of political leaders to nurture normative visions of Europe as a federation but denies its influence as a major force in the normality of European politics and policies. He thus downplays the break with previous sociological analysis that the 'return' of religion might be seen to represent by qualifying its novelty and scale.

According to Leustean, churches were absent from the beginning of the integration process due to the obsession of political actors with protecting national sovereignty. But religious organizations later took advantage of the development of integration by opening up transnational channels. Leustean suggests that there is something like a spill-over gradually involving religious actors in mutual socialization beyond national and denominational cleavages and in direct dialogue with European institutions. He argues that the momentum of Europeanization in the religious sector at the beginning of the 1990s transcended the reluctance of member states who wished to stick to intergovernmentalism. The underlying logic of the European project and trends in religious civil societies are thus stronger than the strategies of political powers.

Turning from the genesis and nature of the European polity to its functioning, De Vliet demonstrates how the main religious lobbies claim an active role in EU policy-making by integrating its specific rationality. He gives evidence of the transformative effect of European institutions on the representation of

religious interests by the diffusion of professional norms which differ from existing national and denominational traditions. Complementing the two preceding contributions, De Vlieger describes the socializing effects of the EU in low politics and hypothesizes that these effects may diffuse through internal channels of participatory democracy in religious social worlds. But he also infers that this development implies compliance and self-limitation on the part of religion.

In a third part, the emphasis is on how national and state systems of regulating religion within Western Europe interact with the EU level. The socio-historical legacy of national models shows not only their resilience but also their adaptation to common societal and political constraints in the context of European integration. Contributions analyse party politics and different territorial levels, from the infra-national to the national and cross-national, including comparisons between countries of the same infra-regional area (Nordic countries). The reformulation of religion is considered here as a political and institutional resource, considering the deep change in beliefs and practices documented by the sociology of religion. Cases of specific interest due to the seniority and the archetypal value of national models (France and the United Kingdom) or the importance of the religious cleavage in the structuring of the domestic political system (Belgium and Luxembourg) are developed in depth.

Philippe Portier develops a historical comparative typology of models for the political regulation of religion in Western Europe. He defends the idea of a general convergence despite very different initial logics. A European secular ethos exists, including the concepts of an autonomous subject, a state whose mission is to protect and serve the individual and a church reduced to the status of a cultural resource. From this common normative basis, the historical diversity of Church–state national arrangements has been reduced, and something like a European pattern is emerging. Guidelines are a flexible separation between politics and religion and equality and recognition as key principles. This trend does not eradicate but diminish plurality. It does not relegate religion into the private sphere but submits it to a higher normativeness, human rights. The European model in-the-making both continues and coexists with national original systems.

John Madeley addresses the question of the possible interconnections between three ‘isms’: Protestantism, Fundamentalism and Euroscepticism. He focuses on Nordic Christian parties to understand why they differ from their continental Christian Democratic counterparts in being distinctly Eurosceptic. Differences between denominations may be an explanation: Protestantism is keen to support the state as a protection for freedom and localism against European centralism and universalism rooted in Catholic values. There is also a logic deriving from the context. Nordic Protestant parties are more religious than German or French Christian Democrats: historically they have been far more marginal in very secularized Scandinavian countries. Hence, they have adopted a more fundamentalist line in terms of religious agendas and electorates and their primary incentive is to ‘speak for God’, which includes giving a voice to other denominations, in contrast to other Christian Democratic parties whose priority is the conquest of

power. Madeley stresses that these Nordic Eurosceptics may alternatively be read as pre-, anti- or post-modern, whether they defend national spiritual 'purity' against the corruption emanating from Brussels, oppose the Enlightenment ideals which inform European integration or promote the respect of cultural specificities against homogenizing trends.

In the case of the UK, Martin Steven proposes another example deriving from Anglicanism. However, he insists above all on the way a national model can slowly Europeanize through compliance with EU legislation and continue to secularize while maintaining its specificity under evolving forms. There is no British tradition of Christian Democracy as a distinct entity. Instead, religion is very present in the political system, but as a diffuse force within all political families. No party seeks to monopolize Christianity as a label, but each has a component promoting Christian values particularly congruent with its general ideological agenda: family values for Conservatives, social justice for Socialists, progressive values for Liberals. Church of England bishops sit in the House of Lords and intervene on all issues but keep to a moderate and non-party line. Religious organizations enjoy a strong legitimacy within public opinion. Religion remains a significant factor in elections even if it is not a political resource controlled by party leaders. In short, Christianity is able to remain part of the political debate and retain established positions, albeit at the price of a certain self-limitation and renunciation of hegemony.

Belgium provides another stimulating case study of religion with an institutionalized position faced with secularization and Europeanization, as documented by Emilie van Haute, Jean-Benoit Pilet and Giulia Sandri. The characteristic of the Belgian system as a consociational democracy is that the coexistence of religious and non-religious components is organized at the heart of politics. The founding denominational cleavage has been upstaged by territorial and linguistic cleavages as the main political and sociological divides. The secular and Catholic pillars are declining as authority structures able to command the whole life of their members but resist as social networks and poles of values. For example, left-wing parties with an ideological inheritance of anti-clericalism continue to have a repellent effect on believers. The pluralization of Belgian society adds further complexity. Muslim citizens are sensitive to the conservative discourse of traditionally religious parties but are more left-orientated due to their socioeconomic status.

This potential confusion between religious, political and immigration-related issues may potentially be more pronounced in a country where foreigners account for 43.8 per cent of its total population. Philippe Poirier addresses the case of Luxembourg, where the issue of State-Church relations has long constituted one of the main founding cleavages of a consociational political system, before stabilizing itself in a 'reconciled' and secularized democracy. The system was based upon the principle of equal treatment of religions, with the notable exception of the favoured position of the Catholic Church in educational matters. In the last 20 years however, the rise of religious pluralism has forced Luxembourgish political actors to rethink this model. The relative growth of Islam and



the increasingly religious overtones of ethical debates (as proved by the intervention of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in the debate on euthanasia, 2008–2009) led to the rise of new controversies about the institutionalization of religious pluralism and to a certain radicalization of religious and secularist positions.

Finally, a fourth part of this volume deals with the ‘alternative modernities’ which may challenge mainstream views about the articulation of politics and religion at European level from inside and below. As mentioned above, the multiplication of migratory movements is one of the most salient features of these alternative modernities, seen in both a common European immigration policy and the Europeanization of pro- or anti-immigration movements. The numerous debates over some Muslim practices, which have so far been limited to local and national levels, have taken on a European dimension, as illustrated by the debates on the wearing of religious signs in public places. The analyses of the various ways political actors deal with the religious issue, notably Islam, at both national and European levels clearly show how acute the comparative approach is. The activism of some immigrant groups has altered local paradigms of secularization and the institutional arrangements stemming from them. Immigration has also provided new room for manoeuvre to religions, particularly in the welfare sector. By extension, migratory flows also had an unexpected effect with the increase of the ‘new religious movements’ (which may have other origins than migrations) asking for recognition at both state and European levels. Religions linked to immigration and so-called ‘new religious movements’ both represent highly structured alternative versions of modernities which may challenge established national and European patterns.

Kristina Stöckl, Julia Mourao Permoser and Sieglinde Rosenberger observe the behaviour of religious organizations (Muslim and Eastern Orthodox groups) as political actors in the context of migration in Austria. They show how the religions of immigrant groups become public religions as these organizations, acting as their representatives, speak in the name of a whole community and engage in formal policy cooperation and informal symbolic cooperation with the government. This integration of religious leaders into existing settings of selective cooperation may enable the resolution of conflicts over the practical regulation of faiths by means of a search for compromises. Meanwhile, integration accentuates the visibility of the faith of newcomers in the secular public sphere. It may reinforce the politicization of the distinction between the secular and the sacred. It presents a risk of a backlash in the perception of the immigrant as a primarily religious person who is substantially different from the rest of the population.

Justin Gest inverts the perspectives and uses Islam as a tool to address the contradictions and weaknesses of European modernity. The importance of social, economic, political and religious structures is qualified in order to emphasize the key role of individuals and the way they perceive and reproduce their own alienation. The dictatorship of ‘similarity’ is fading away under the pressure of globalization and social change, as well as open structures of opportunity for particularisms. Religion may find a place as a complement to and a partner for

the state. As such, Islam does not appear as an entity defying European modernity but, on the contrary, as a potential opportunity to solve its failures in the regulation of social life.

This individualistic trend is even more pronounced within the new religious movements than it is within institutionalized monotheisms. In her chapter, Sabrina Pastorelli scrutinizes how two European countries, France and Italy, deal with the so-called ‘new religions’ (e.g. Jehovah’s Witnesses and Soka Gakkai). The chapter demonstrates clearly that a stabilized model for the regulation of new forms of religious affiliation is still lacking, both at national and supranational levels. In these conditions, each nation-state refers to its own inherited Church–state model. The French conception of state and *laïcité* has more difficulty recognizing new intermediary bodies – especially religious ones – between the individual and the state. In contrast, Italy, marked by a long and complex interaction between Catholicism, political cultures and the state, opts for a more flexible and open attitude. Beyond national contrasts, this lack of a common model may lead to a discrepancy between national levels and the EU system, where these new religious forms may find a new legitimacy in the name of human rights and freedom of expression.

In their concluding chapter, Foret and Itçaina revisit the main theoretical and empirical contributions contained in this four-part volume. They end by specifically highlighting three points: the interest of focusing on Western European situations, the focus on the properly political (and not only ‘public’) dimension of the new visibility of religious actors and issues, and the underlying hypothesis of a progressive convergence between patterns of political regulation of religion, at both domestic and EU levels. Finally, they invite further research by pointing to three research directions which may: (1) pay more attention to politics within religious institutions and religion within political institutions; (2) enhance a more active dialogue between political sociology and sociology of religion; (3) extend research on every territorial dimension, from the local to the global, into the complex contemporary interaction between religion and politics.

## Notes

- 1 ‘De Gucht apologises for having offended Jews’. Online. Available: [www.euractiv.com/en/future-eu/de-gucht-apologises-having-offended-jews-news-497455](http://www.euractiv.com/en/future-eu/de-gucht-apologises-having-offended-jews-news-497455), 6 September 2010 (accessed 8 September 2010).
- 2 Akbar Ahmed, “‘Burn Quran Day’ an outrage to Muslims”, CNN, 20 August 2010, Online. Available: [http://edition.cnn.com/2010/OPINION/08/20/ahmed.quran.burning/index.html#fbid=tihgImdjBT\\_&wom=false](http://edition.cnn.com/2010/OPINION/08/20/ahmed.quran.burning/index.html#fbid=tihgImdjBT_&wom=false) (accessed 8 September 2010).
- 3 On this point, see also the contribution of Jeff Haynes in this volume.

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