Beyond Sacred and Secular

Beyond Sacred and Secular

Politics of Religion in Israel and Turkey

Sultan Tepe

STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
STANFORD, CALIFORNIA

Stanford University Press
Stanford, California
© 2008 by the Board of Trustees of the
Leland Stanford Junior University.
All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system without the prior written permission of Stanford University Press.

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free, archival-quality paper

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Tepe, Sultan, 1969-
Beyond sacred and secular: politics of religion in Israel and
Turkey / Sultan Tepe.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-8047-5864-2 (cloth: alk. paper)
1. Religion and politics. 2. Judaism and politics—Israel. 3. Democracy—Israel. 4. Political parties—Israel. 5. Islam and politics—Turkey. 6. Democracy—Turkey. 7. Political parties—Turkey. I. Title.
BL65.P7T46 2008
324.2561'082—dc22
2008007822

Typeset by Westchester Book Group in 10/12 Sabon

To my father—my first, best, and continuing teacher

Contents

List of Tables *ix*

List of Figures *xi*

Acknowledgments *xiii*

Introduction
Beyond Sacred and Secular:
A Comparative Analysis of Religious Politics
in Israel and Turkey *1*

PART I
Paradox of Modernity?
The Conundrum of Religion in Politics

1. Politics of Religion:
Competing and Coalescing Conceptualizations *33*

2. Religion in the Making of the Israeli
and Turkish Nation-States:
Incomplete Debates and Continuing Institutional Reformations *65*

PART II
Ideologues or Pragmatists?
The Ideas and Ideologies of Religious Politics

3. Representing the Sacred in Mundane Politics:
The Ideologies and Leaders of Mafdal and Shas *103*

4. Representing Islam in Secular Politics:
The Ideologies and Leaders of the Nationalist Action,
the National View, and the Justice and Development Parties *159*

PART III
The Popular Roots of Religious Parties

5. Between Zionism and Judaism?
Religious Party Supporters in Israel *229*

6. Between Laicism and Islam?
Religious Party Supporters in Turkey *283*

Conclusion
Sacro-Secular Encounters:
A Comparative Model of Religious Parties *343*

Notes *371*

Index *407*

List of Tables

2.1 Turning points in the incorporation of religion into the state structure *82*
3.1 A comparison of the ideological premises of Mafdal and Shas *155*
4.1 A comparison of the ideological premises of NAP, the Prosperity Party, and JDP *224*
5.1 Main determinants of party choice in Israel *261*
5.2 Most salient issues for religious party constituencies in Israel *263*
5.3 A multinomial logit model of Shas and Mafdal support *268*
5.4 A logit model of Shas support *274*
5.5 Assessment of Shas's performance by its supporters *276*
6.1 Religious practices and religious party support in Turkey *311*
6.2 The state of political trust in Turkish politics *320*
6.3 Salient issues for NAP, Prosperity, and JDP supporters *323*
6.4 A multinomial logit model of religious party support in Turkey *329*
C.1 A typology of religious parties *366*

List of Figures

2.1 An ideological map of the prestate movements and the genealogy parties in Israel *80*
2.2 An ideological map of the selected major movements and the parties in Turkey *87*
4.1 Genealogy of National View parties *188*
5.1 Vote shares of party blocs and nonparticipants in Israel *230*
5.2 Religious self-identification of Israeli citizens *250*
5.3 Birthplaces and self-defined ethnic identities in Israel *256*
5.4 Political positioning of parties on two ideological dimensions *279*
6.1 Vote share by party blocs and nonparticipants in Turkey *284*
6.2 Support for laicism and religiosity *306*
6.3 Endorsement of Islamic (Sharia) rule *308*
6.4 Dispersion of religiosity and party support in Turkey *310*
6.5 Sources of primary identifications and party choice in Turkey *313*
6.6 Political positioning of parties and leaders on the Left-Right spectrum, 2005 *318*

Acknowledgments

The following pages are the product of a long journey, which has been enormously rewarding and challenging. I am grateful to all of my colleagues, friends, and students who are intrigued by the question of "why not" as much as "why" and were not confined to the comfort zone of their immediate intellectual neighborhoods.

I could not have braved it through this journey if not for Konuralp Pamukçu's clear vision and relentless support. Special thanks to Roni Baum, Michal Shamir, Frank Tachau, Aryeh Schmulewitz, Bob Luskin, Müge Göçek and Rabbi Avidani, who contributed to this project in so many different but substantial ways. The University of Texas at Austin, the University of Illinois at Chicago, and the U.S. Institute of Peace were all very generous in their endorsement of my research. I am also grateful to Kate Wahl and the feedback of the reviewers for proving that publishing a book can be an enjoyable process despite all the horror stories. I was lucky to have Matt Powers, Elisabeth Muhlenberg, and Heidi Lawson as research assistants; their meticulous work deserves much praise. Had not my dear parents, sisters, and friends in Istanbul, Jerusalem, Ankara, Tel Aviv, Austin, and Chicago constantly reminded me of why the arduous journey was worthwhile, I could not be writing these sentences.

Beyond Sacred and Secular

INTRODUCTION

Beyond Sacred and Secular

A Comparative Analysis of Religious Politics in Israel and Turkey

> Some religions are the harbingers of democracy and progress, whereas others are not. It may be argued that in a number of countries neither capitalism nor democracy could develop because the beliefs associated with the religions that dominated there were incompatible with an autonomous and progressive civil society.[1]

Politics based on the sacred is often seen as antithetical to liberal democracy. Even scholars such as Tocqueville, who saw religion as an asset to democracy, warned, "When . . . any religion has struck its roots deep into a democracy, beware that you do not disturb it; but rather watch it carefully, as the most precious bequest of aristocratic ages."[2] This concern is based on the idea that private beliefs have distinctive public consequences. Being a good believer and a good democrat may pull individuals in opposite directions: Being a faithful believer means often deciding today's social issues in accordance with a prophesied future, taking some religious ideas as unquestionable facts, and basing public decisions on the exercise of beliefs rather than reasoning based on contesting positions. Being a good member of a democracy, on the other hand, requires a skeptical mind, the belief that today's decision shapes an open-ended future, the willingness to negotiate on important, even religious, issues, and the compliance to consent to the majority's ideas in order to secure the community's overall well-being. Attending to these crosscurrents, even scholars who valued religion's potential also questioned whether the greater role of religion in today's societies made them more susceptible to authoritarian forces, especially when they lacked free and vibrant civil milieus.[3] Others have argued that to the extent that religion has made inroads into politics and effectively commands unqualified loyalty

and obedience from larger groups, it becomes a major liability and a dangerous force for democracy. Obedience, in essence, entails acting "at the bidding of some external authority," and such action "would have no place in a state where the government is vested in the whole people."[4] Democracy's promise—and also its premise—involves a fundamental paradox: it protects free will only for as long as the people *exercise* free will. In a democracy "people would remain free, as long as the laws were done not on external authority, but their own free consent."[5]

A short historical survey shows why these ideas left a permanent impression on our inquiries into religion. At first the fear of religion's impact on politics seemed to have dissipated in many ways. At the abstract level, more people supported the idea that democracy's real value is to find a place even for those who question its fundamental principles. But more importantly, the recent triumph of liberal democracy seemed to seal the fate of religion and eased anxiety over its political role. Since the early 1970s, religion seemed to have lost both its interest in world politics and its ability to command significant authority in an increasingly pluralistic and secularized world. In the aftermath of the cold war, world politics reached an unprecedented normative consensus: the political survival of polities seemed to depend on their ability to maintain their public sphere as an open marketplace of ideas where both secular and sacred ideas count only as different opinions or ideological positions and nothing more. Under such a system, no ideas or beliefs are given immunity from democratic scrutiny or political challenges. Nor are they permitted to claim inherent final authority. The quickly growing number of democracies and the decline of the public quests based on religion seemed to indicate that the heyday of religion's popular role in the public sphere was over.

The recent, sudden rise of religious political parties, which brought old ideas and new institutions together, unexpectedly disturbed this clear picture. Since the early 1980s, religious parties have established themselves as pivotal actors in one country after another, ranging from advanced to transitional democracies. Among many other parties, Japan's Komeito, India's Bharatia Janata Party, Sri Lanka's Jathika Hela Urumaya party, Indonesia's Prosperous Justice Party, Lebanon's Hizbullah, and Palestine's Hamas have achieved stunning successes despite their short histories and weakly professed ideologies. The proliferation of religious groups has reached such a level that it is hard to find a country where religious symbols and beliefs have *not* become a critical component of the political landscape. This remarkable capacity of religion to maintain its influence in the national and international political spheres at a time when the conditions would seem to be the most inimical constitutes one of the most puzzling aspects of world politics today. Scholars in many subfields of the

social sciences and beyond attend in one way or another to the pervasive questions of (1) why religion assumed a pivotal role in so many countries where secularization has seemed to have consolidated its roots and (2) how religion's growing political power will affect world politics. For political scientists the riddle of religious parties pertains to the tide of authoritative religious movements in many countries which are also marked by a powerful rise of liberal democracies.[6] This enigmatic return of religion poses some daunting questions: Are religious parties the new contrivance of liberal democracies that blend instrumental logic and faith into an unconventional couple? Or are they new demons of liberalism that both capitalize on and undercut the liberties that democracy secures? Furthermore, are we witnessing a religiously-driven expansion of democracy and liberalism or a religiously-rooted threat to democracy and world peace? Alternatively, are religious parties in some societies manifestations of homegrown democratic ideas, and thus a blessing in disguise to world politics? What, if anything, do different religious movements subsumed under the global rise of religion have in common? Do we misidentify sui generis religious movements by classifying them under the title of global return of religion? Are religious movements products of global secular conditions and can they be seen as unconventional agents that ultimately enhance global integration and the promises of modernity?

These questions lie at the heart of the following chapters. Our analysis builds on the idea that the politics of Judaism and Islam, two areas that are often segregated analytically, when examined together, offer a unique perspective on the politics of religion. Despite their popular description as exceptional cases, not only did the global wave of religion sweep over the political forces in both Israel and Turkey, but religious parties rose to prominence in each country in remarkably similar ways. The stunning salience of religious issues and the political victories of religious parties since the mid-1980s have generated an almost experimental setting for closely examining the global and local aspects of religious parties. Comparing the politics of Judaism and Islam or the politics of religion Israeli and Turkish religious politics might appear to some like comparing apples and oranges. Not only the received wisdom but also the prevailing scholarly accounts tell us that there are vast differences between Judaism and Islam, thus a comparison of the parties embedded in these doctrines is an exercise in analytical stretching, ultimately amounting to a futile academic endeavor. Scholarly studies perpetuate this idea by carefully separating Judaic and Islamic parties and treating them as different genres. Our analysis questions precisely this conviction and shows that the pervasive assumption—that religious parties of distinctive doctrines are incommensurable—creates a critical gulf in our understanding of reli-

gious parties. Unless we approach various manifestations of political religion through the same conceptual matrix without oversimplifying them, our explanations become self-fulfilling prophecies.

Crossing the boundaries between the politics of Judaism and Islam affords us a view of religion from beyond the boundaries of a specific religious doctrine. Our expanded horizon permits us to both engage in a critical dialogue with and to benefit from a range of studies that fall into narrowly defined research areas (e.g., those that explain why a religious movement is successful in a certain country) to those that tackle broad research conundrums (e.g., those that delve into why religious groups became critical contenders for power not only in new but also in old democracies in an era when we expect to see them least). Therefore, the following analysis deliberately seeks to transcend the conventional boundaries of various disciplines. Our inquiries engage with and across various research fields, starting at the most detailed level of discussion, typically contributed by experts on a certain region or electoral politics, and moving to a much broader level, one most often frequented by social theorists. One might argue that the absence of detailed studies and the limitations of existing research need to be weighed against the recent metamorphosis of world politics. In fact, by all accounts the terrain of world politics has been drastically transformed over the last two decades and remains in a state of flux. Scholars in general and students of political science in particular search for continuities in the midst of radical transformations and face the challenge of developing a clear view of the future from a chaotic picture of the present. The products of the intellectual anxiety over the unanticipated and powerful role of religion have been mixed. On the one hand, it has served as the catalyst in the exponentially growing number of accounts on such popular themes as the threat or lack thereof of religion to domestic and global peace. On the other hand, these accounts often come without a commensurate effort at collecting empirical data or holding intense conceptual debates that can build bridges between different approaches.

Attesting to the shift in world politics and widespread audience interest, between 1980 and 1990, seven hundred books on the impact of religion on politics were entered into the Library of Congress. Mirroring the escalating attention, this number rapidly rose to three thousand in the following decade. As the overall quantity grew, the studies increasingly fell within the boundaries of narrowly defined research communities whose interest lay in specific issues, ranging from the violent actions or reactions triggered by religion to religion's ability to provide new political skills to urban marginals. The urge to analyze the pressing questions posed by what seems to be the inexorable rise of religion has been impaired by

some major obstacles, especially in political science. Speaking to the startling lacuna that exists today and to the intellectual stumbling blocks that prevent an improved level of knowledge, an overall assessment of the state of political science in 2006 concluded that "apart from economics and geography, it is hard to find a social science that has given less attention to religion than political science."[7] Wald and Wilcox attributed this bleak picture to the fact that the religious factors "fit neither the legal institutional framework that dominated the early years of the discipline nor its later positivist turn to behavioralism and empiricism." While religion is an acknowledged conundrum, its analysis does not easily lend itself to the dominant methodological and theoretical preferences, such as those presented by rational-choice or institutionalist approaches. In some cases "the sheer complexity and the challenges of measuring" political aspects of religion "constitute a barrier to entry" for religion as a research topic.[8]

In an effort to address this theoretical and empirical void, the following chapters incorporate and engage with the arguments of scholars working in a variety of research areas, from specialized area studies with context specific puzzles—such as why the election shares of certain parties have increased—to overarching theoretical ones that grapple with cross-spatial and temporal conundrums—such as how democracies protect individual differences and liberties against homogenizing but important claims for group rights. Among others, these broad queries ask whether a new form of parties, religious democratic parties, is in the making; whether religious parties are a menace to liberal democracy; or whether they give new meaning to, or serve as unconventional carriers of, liberal democratic ideals. The answers offered indicate that a "view from nowhere," without paradigmatic lenses, is hard to achieve for any social issue—especially the politics of religion. More importantly, generating empirically well-informed analyses in an area that has long been neglected by scholars cannot be commensurate to the growing interest unless the limits of our inquiries are carefully defined, conventional research tools are recalibrated, and outcomes are made relevant to the understanding of other cases.[9] To more clearly depict the debates that this analysis both draws on and is critical of, we can, at the risk of simplification, identify two sets of approaches: the *convergence* and *confrontation* frameworks on religious politics and *the modernity* and *multiple modernities* debate on the broader role of religion and liberalism. Each approach to religion and politics filters its complexity and explains why religion resurfaced as a political force and how it affects the ongoing reconfiguration of world politics. More importantly, each offers us an ultimate direction that is likely to emerge from the current political flux.

The convergence approach to the politics of religion contends that

liberal democracy differs from other modes of governance in that it strikes a unique balance between individual autonomy, economic welfare, and political stability. History, especially the cold war era, has confirmed that regimes that suppress rival ideologies are eventually doomed to fail. Only political systems that treat their polities as a marketplace of ideas prevent their own demise. It is therefore inevitable that narrow and limited forms of government will deteriorate and converge on the merits of liberal democracy. This prediction makes the pluralism of the public sphere and the recognition of other views not a choice, but a political imperative for political survival. Therefore, religion can only maintain its public presence through a secularization process that enables it to recognize multiple centers of political power and normative values and to accept the decline of its political and moral authority in the public sphere.

Studies informed by the convergence framework contentedly declared victory in the mid-1980s and early 1990s, when the number of full-fledged democracies increased at an unprecedented rate from fifty-three to eighty-eight countries.[10] The global tide of democratization appeared to be pulling many countries along and securing not only the hegemony of liberal democracy but also one of its premises and products—the secularization of world politics. Yet critics of this paradigmatic dominance labeled it a premature celebration that distracted scholars from urgent trends. The wave of global democracy masked some strong opposing currents that have the potential for altering the entire landscape of world politics. Transitions to democracy seem to have halted in countries where free elections did not generate fair political competitions or where democratically elected governments used electoral politics in service to their authoritarian policies. Instead of participating in a global community of liberal democracies rooted in the protection of individual rights and liberties, many countries appear to be languishing in a gray zone of illiberal democratic regimes. These hybrid regimes have stalled at the difficult point of transition, have infringed on the rights of the political opposition and of ethnic or cultural minorities, and have undermined the autonomy of individuals, all while still enjoying international recognition as democracies.[11]

Among those who believed in the ultimate convergence of competing regimes under liberalism, the responses to liberalism's potentially powerful undercurrents and to the democratic balance sheet of expanding religious groups have been diverse. Firm believers in convergence view the return of religion not as a sign of decline, but as a powerful validation of the penetration of liberal democracy. In their view, religion's current political presence is its last gasp and final backlash before its assured demise. Others turn to structural, cultural, or economic reasons to explain the

tenacity of religious movements. As a result the entrapment of religion by failed processes surfaces as an explanation to the delays in and impediments to the global march toward democracy. As many observers refrain from questioning liberal democracy and convergence as the ultimate destination, they contend that many countries are in a transitional phase and cannot yet be assigned to a specific regime. In this view, religious parties need to be seen as ephemeral forces with a limited capacity to delay democratization efforts. Accordingly, many labels have been created that would have been considered a contradiction in terms only three decades ago, such as "illiberal democracies" or "transnational oppositional progressive religious movements." Collier and Levitsky have identified more than a hundred qualifications of the term *democracy*, from pseudo and façade to delayed, tarnished, or unruly.[12]

Skeptics, on the other hand, ask whether some countries are mired permanently in the precarious gray area between full-fledged democracy and outright theocratic dictatorship. For this group, inventing qualifiers for the concept of democracy only serves to mitigate the fear that global liberalization could fail. By introducing hybrid regimes and unconventional political movements as oddities of transitional politics or as reactionary and thus evanescent forces, these paradoxical phenomena become normalized, thereby hindering our understanding of new political groups, ideas, and processes. If this is indeed the case, the convergence model only marginalizes the role of religion and fails to understand its ever-increasing political role except as a deviation and a surmountable obstacle on the global march to liberal democracy. It also glosses over the fact that during this global wave of democracy, religious movements asserted their power not only in new but also in established democracies, and that the impacts and social networks of these movements transcended national boundaries. The Christian Right Movement in the United States, the Free Theological Movement in Latin America, the Islamic Brotherhood Movement in North Africa, the Catholic Movement in Eastern Europe, the Orthodox Movement in the former Soviet Union countries, and the Hindu Nationalist Movement in India all became main contenders for political power, indicating that religion's relationship to democracy is more complicated than many have anticipated.

While the convergence supporters grapple with the question of how religion can be incorporated into the global liberal world and the reasons for the lack of integration, the trajectory of changes provided by the confrontation model leaves us with a less optimistic picture. Unlike the convergence model, the confrontation model assigns a central role to religion and singles out religion as one of the most resilient and salient sources of difference among and within political communities. From the lenses of

the confrontation approach, with the demise of other ideologies religion emerged as the main cause of conflict in post–cold world war politics at both the local and international levels. Religion claims to be the ultimate source of social order and the final authority on many controversial issues that have bearing on not only those who endorse, but also those who question these beliefs. Therefore, ideologies rooted in religion clash with the premises of liberal democracy, which rests on the autonomy of individuals, the diversity of values, and the superiority of reason to belief.[13] It is important to note that from the confrontational perspective, distinct religious traditions do not necessarily form a coherent, monolithic bloc. Quite the contrary, the increasing interactions among communities and ideas grounded in different religious traditions sharpen their contrasts and bring to the fore their contradictory theological convictions. Therefore, not only the confrontation between religion and secularism, but also the rivalry between different religious communities is inevitable.[14] The rise of religious parties attests to this unavoidable pluralization of the marketplace of ideas and to the increasing awareness of inherent differences among religious and secular groups.

The confrontation paradigm leaves some room for an affirmative role for religion, albeit in an ironical fashion. Echoing the projection of the convergence approach, some scholars argue that religious beliefs could become part of a liberal project by relinquishing some authority over social norms and political order. After all, even in a Tocquevillian world that readily assigns democratic values to religious association, it is believed that "religion, being free and powerful within its own sphere and *content with the position reserved for it*, realizes that its sway is all the better established because it relies only on its own powers without external support" (emphases added).[15] Yet doing so would undermine the claim of omniscience that is inherent within sacred and fundamental ideas of religion. Since such a process of self-negation is unlikely to happen, a clash between religious and other political forces is a more probable scenario. The widespread appearance of local and transnational religious movements is taken not only as a sign of the tenacity of religion in general but also as a mounting reaction to the diminished role of religion under liberal democracy. The driving force behind religious parties, therefore, is the irreconcilable difference between ideologies embedded in religion and secularization that are amplified in political contexts imprinted by liberal democracy. The increasingly popular metaphor of "a new kind of cold war" between religion and liberal democracy captures the antagonistic nature of this politics. For many scholars this new cold war is "no less obstructive of a peaceful international order than the old one was." After all, "no satisfactory compromise between the religious vision of the national state and that of liberal democracy is possible."[16]

A review of convergence and confrontation frameworks to religious parties reveals that, behind their differences, they both share and perpetuate some deeply rooted foundational concepts. In both, the term *religion* encompasses monotheistic and other belief systems, but within the realm of monotheistic religions, Judeo-Christian traditions and Islamic traditions have been carefully separated. The few and weak attempts that have been made to defy this strict separation by using the term of *Judeo-Islamic* have not been successful.[17] Underlying this distinction is the idea that the communities and institutions of Judeo-Christian traditions either had limited claims to political authority (captured by "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's") or underwent a gradual historical process of secularization that led them to limit their social and political claims. Islam's distinctive historical evolution (or lack of it) and doctrinal differences set Islam apart from other religions. Islam has never been secularized in countries with majority Muslim populations and has never ceased to be the most significant source of state legitimacy and, therefore, a main force in politics. While scholars have delved into the question of whether Islamic traditions and democracy are compatible from very different perspectives, the notion of Islamic exceptionalism emerged as a shared, implicit understanding, glossing over Islam's complex, multifaceted doctrines.[18]

While many of the existing analyses can be seen as different articulations of the confrontation and convergence models, the debate can also be approached at a higher level of abstraction in order to better understand our paradigmatic windows. For social theorists, the preoccupation with the vexing question of whether religious parties can be instrumental in creating or strangling liberal democracy reflects a deeper issue that often escapes the interests of scholars who study the form and appearance of religious parties: Can modernity take multiple forms? Put differently, can the promises of liberalism be fulfilled in traditional settings and by what appear to be authoritarian agents?[19] Beneath the ongoing debates lies the idea that modernity is rooted in the Enlightenment-humanist rejection of tradition and authority in favor of reason and natural science.[20] Some take this origin to the extreme and conclude that modernity is the triumph of reason over belief, and more importantly, an essentially Western product that emerged from the intellectual debates, political conflicts, and social transformations of Western Europe. Therefore, liberal democracy, as a political product of modernity, may fail to take root in culturally and historically alien territories. Having their roots in the modernity thesis, it is not surprising that neither the convergence nor the confrontation model questions this normalized conclusion. For this reason, even the accounts of those with a less skeptical view of religion are imprinted with the Western

experience. For instance, some scholars acknowledge that instead of challenging democracy, religious parties can play and have played an instrumental role in the demise of authoritarian regimes, as they did first in Europe (1970s) and then in Latin America (1990s), gradually evolving into mass parties without completely relinquishing the ideas that make them religious.[21] However, implicit in these conclusions is the belief that Christian-Democratic movements and parties ultimately benefited from the Judeo-Christian tradition of accepting multiple sources of political authority and of challenging authoritarianism without trying to dominate politics. Many of the new religious parties of today are embedded in ideas from non–Judeo-Christian traditions, a circumstance that appears to make them especially threatening to the stability of world politics. These parties' political experiences have not been those of secularization through which the boundaries between religious authorities and others are contested and negotiated. To become a reliable player in the game of democracy, religious parties need to be exposed to such a process or adopt its outcomes. Some observers are especially alarmed by their awareness that in Islamic countries, religious parties have established themselves as critical actors at a time when their respective democracies are still weak, thus making these democracies susceptible to totalitarian tendencies and clashes, both locally and globally.

While this ubiquitous, yet mostly implicit, conflation of Westernization and modernity continues to sharply imprint efforts to understand new religious parties, it has also led some to speak of the possibility of multiple modernities.[22] Recognizing that modernity can be conceived of as plural invites us to resist conventional wisdom and normalized assumptions. This pluralistic incision directs our attention to the need to loosen the tight grip of deductive and deterministic accounts on our efforts to understand how the contribution of religious movements and parties can unfold in different directions—including toward democracy. Such adjustment requires a deep shift in our thinking to allow us to acknowledge that the ideas of modernity (e.g., autonomy of individual, free will, an understanding of history as an open-ended project) can take root in unexpected places, practices, and traditions. Although deductive approaches suggest otherwise, the possibility that religious doctrines are capable of accommodating autonomy, and that a strong religious community can coexist with independent agents, needs to be part of our inquiries. After all, at its core modernity entails the breakdown of all traditional legitimizations of the political order. However, it does not and cannot preclude multiple ways of constructing a new order.[23] Therefore, tradition does not necessarily disappear in modernity. Instead, it is reinterpreted in critical ways.[24] Each community can produce the principles of modernity according to its habitus, its life

patterns, shared sets of meanings, and structures of response. Reinterpretations of different traditions under conditions of modernity could give way to a variety of sociopolitical arrangements that may or may not involve religion. The understanding that modernity does not replace existing traditions, and that traditions can accommodate modern ideas, has given us terms such as the *vernacularization* or *indigenization* of democracy. These concepts indicate that communities can and are likely to produce their own modernity. For example, Judaic or Islamic parties can generate modern political ideas on their own terms and in their own unique ways. Accepting that universality of modernity does not need to manifest itself as a homogenizing force, provides us with a perspective where religious parties could serve as unusual agents of local articulations of democracy, and not necessarily a threat to liberalism.

From the perspective of the multiple modernities debates, the convergence and confrontation models are hamstrung by their overt and tacit assumptions about religion, which express themselves best in the overall suspicion of new religious political groups. Both approaches express anxiety over the ability of religious parties to harbor antidemocratic traits under the guise of political parties: although they act under the façade of a new institution, religious parties are likely to act as sect-like ideologies and mirror the fundamental ideas of their respective doctrines. Their political leadership and their political agenda are expected to be submissive to their religious leadership. Religious parties ultimately have the potential of moving politics in an authoritarian direction by imposing their religious ideology. The convergence model, in part due to the positive role that Judeo-Christian parties have played in world politics, seems to offer a more favorable, but still wary, assessment of these parties. The cautious optimism of the convergence model suggests that, when allowed to compete politically, religious groups are forced to become less programmatic, more ideologically distinct, and more heterogeneous. Therefore, religious parties can and have become agents of democracy through bargaining, strategic action, or external forces and not through internal, self-enforcing, ideological commitments. Underlying this conclusion is not a different view on religion, but a widely shared faith, especially among political scientists, in the transformative power of democratic competition: against all odds, democracy can take root without democrats, and democratic ideologies are often not the main ingredient but a by-product of democratic electoral competitions.[25] All participants in a democracy, once they are engaged in the electoral competition, change and come to accept not only the procedures but also the principles of democracy.

Against this backdrop of contested and overlapping understandings of and prospects for the interactions between religion and liberal democracy,

the following chapters first introduce us to a set of implicit and explicit abstract postulations, the limits and potential of the primary data, and the ways in which we use empirical evidence to analyze religious politics. Given the dearth of theoretically and empirically grounded studies, our analysis responds to the calls that urge us to integrate primary empirical evidence into our explanations. Due to the complexity of religious ideas and the reluctance of religious leaders and partisans to participate in studies, any effort to draw on the primary analysis of religious ideas and their carriers poses some challenges. The integration of primary observations and empirical evidence ipso facto cannot illuminate the nature of religious movements. Our analysis therefore includes frequent reminders of the argument that theory-neutral analyses of empirical data cannot exist. Unless we keep our instruments in perspective and remember their limitations and promises in assessing the compiled empirical evidence, they might permanently blur our vision. More significantly, given the long history of religion in social life and its marginalization by scholars, it is especially important to remember, as Dryzek put it, that with frequent applications of its instruments, a theory can fade from awareness, "so the method can yield seemingly direct access to observed phenomena. In reading a thermometer one does not need to be aware of how Boyle's law is applying." As the instrument can become like a permanent window through which a room is viewed, "the observer can let the instrument slip from awareness."[26] In an effort to ensure that we are not treating the view from our window as the only universe that exists and presumably encompasses the nature of the politics of religion, the subsequent analysis also calls into question the roots of our postulations and how we substantiate and test the deductive explanations that follow from the convergence and confrontation theories.

Our comparative inquiry into politics of Judaism and Islam positions itself first in the existing frameworks and then seeks to carve out a new analytical space that eventually moves beyond their boundaries by blending primary data and conceptual debates. A systematic comparison of the theoretical premises, units of analysis, and teleological frameworks of both convergence and confrontation models indicates that each concentrates on different aspects of the puzzling appeal of political religious groups. They privilege either the characteristics of religious doctrines (ideas) or the social or the political context in which these parties are embedded (structure), or center on their adherents, namely the leadership and their partisans (agents). Religion's interaction with liberal democracy is seen in binary terms as either acceptance or rejection (e.g., modernity thesis) or is presented as an unprecedented new path to local and global coexistence and enlightenment (multiple modernization thesis). Seldom

do studies penetrate the nexus of religious ideas, the capacities of religious agents and the unique political settings they are part of without subsuming them under teleological expectations. The prevailing analyses assume that ideologies per se cannot be used as explanatory variables unless the comparison is made across different religions or denominations. After all, common wisdom tells us that ideologies derived from the same religion generate more or less the same ideas, thus molding all religious parties it informs similarly. In cases where the ideological differences between religious parties based on the same religion are too significant to ignore, observers have used the competition for power among religious leaders to explain the divergences among them. Even in cases where observers have taken the ideologies of religious parties seriously, the ideas contained in those ideologies have been played down. After all it is not its specific content, they presume, but the overall role played by ideology that matters most.

The angst over the sudden appearance and unanticipated nature of religious parties manifests itself best in the proliferation of accounts that either offer very thick descriptions of one religious community, movement, or leader, or very thin analyses that simply juxtapose various cases without seeking analytical commonalities. The broad and institutional study of political parties has been losing its once dominant role in social science and has become increasingly narrow and confined more and more to analyses of survey data. In fact, political scientists have been urged to refocus their attention on big theoretical issues, to treat the organizational and ideological aspects of parties holistically, and to question their broad roles in social and political processes by developing macro-level and panoramic analyses of the broader political process.[27] Missing in the studies of the politics of religion and parties are conceptually or empirically more-elaborated and well-defined accounts that can generate new ideas and test the validity of existing approaches. The shortage of these studies is especially critical given that macro-level structural accounts tend to depict the supporters of religious parties as socially reactive and culturally displaced masses or as religious conservatives who turn to religious parties in order to voice their political dissent.

Alternative studies are grounded in ethnographic descriptions of selected communities or are rich in anecdotal evidence in order to illuminate the worldview of religious partisans. These studies direct our attention to how individuals or communities cope with their changing social and economic environment by imbuing their religious beliefs with new ideas and values. In these studies, we often find analytically expedient illustrations of how seemingly outdated traditional practices become the foundation of social capital in newly emerging, alienated urban settings and succeed in