

Does Religion Belong in Politics?: Case Studies of the United States and Bangladesh

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Debates regarding the role of religion in political behavior have become increasingly contentious since the millennium, particularly in the cases of the United States and Bangladesh. Although the current literature effectively analyzes the response of the public toward political religiosity or secularity in both states, there is a failure to bridge a link between both states that would generalize the role of religious politics across states. This paper will fill this gap by examining the link between political religiosity and public perception of governmental stability in the United States and Bangladesh. The role of religion in a state's political activity and its ability to influence public trust in institutional stability is explored by conducting case studies utilizing primary and secondary source analysis in the United States and Bangladesh from 2017-2022. In doing so, the driving factor determining acceptance or rejection of overt political religiosity by the public depends on national identity: if a constituency believes religion is integral to the identity of the state and its people, overt political religiosity is widely accepted and potentially even preferred to secular government policy. This study's significance lies in its generalizability through its comparison of Western and non-Western democracies and leaves room for potential similar comparisons between different states and on a broader scale.

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Introduction

The role of religion as a governing influence has become increasingly contentious in modern times. The era of state-sanctioned religion has all but disappeared, with very few states endorsing specific religions or allowing religious influences to take part in governing processes. Other states, such as the United Kingdom, find that consideration of their state-sanctioned religion bodes well for institutional stability in their long-standing and powerful democracy, though such states are becoming fewer and farther between. Even if a consensus can be reached on the role of religion in governance on the state level, a disconnect may occur with the public when such policy is ultimately administered. As secular democracies spread throughout the globe, the intermingling of religion and state is usually met with displeasure, anger, and even fear from a majority of the population. However, in other cases, the opposite might hold true: a democratic public may prefer that the state mix its affairs with religious dealings, or at least religious rhetoric. How is it then that such fundamentally similar institutions may hold staunchly different opinions on the role of religion in politics?

This contradiction is especially present in the United States and Bangladesh, two democracies founded upon the principle of separation of church and state. Despite this separation, religion is still entrenched in the social workings of each state, with religious groups of all kinds valuing its role as a moral stabilizer. However, only the US has maintained this principle after codifying it in the First Amendment of its Constitution. Despite this codification, religious rhetoric is employed regularly on the state level from the time of the Revolution and then skyrocketing in the mid-twentieth century (Edwards, 2015).

Though most Americans appreciate the role religion plays in social life, they agree that religion should remain entirely separate from politics and express disdain at most references to religion made by politicians (Pew Research Center, 2019). This sentiment has become especially salient following the election of President Donald Trump in 2016 and the resultant rise of Christian nationalist sentiment, which is generally defined

as a belief that the US is a Christian nation and is entrenched in racial, gender, and xenophobic justification for Christian supremacy within national borders. Christian nationalism has spread notably throughout the political scene, particularly within the Republican party. This has deepened polarization within the American government, with the more secular Democratic party appalled at the implementation of religious zeal in politics.

Bangladesh's establishment of state secularism met a much grimmer fate than in the US. It was one of the four central tenets of the infant state's philosophy, established by its founder Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1971. After Sheikh Mujib's assassination in 1975, Presidents Ziaur Rahman and H.M. Ershad respectively replaced secularism with "absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah" and established Islam as the state religion in Bangladesh. However, unlike in the US, this establishment was met with relatively little backlash, and could even be seen as being welcomed by the Bangladeshi public. Yet in recent years, Sheikh Mujib's Awami League (AL) party, led by his daughter Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, continuously acts to reestablish secularism in the state, be it through policy or practice. Maintaining power through elections with questionable fairness and authority, the dominant AL government administers swaths of what has been labeled by scholars as ultra-secularist violence by suppressing both minority religious groups and the public practice of majority Islam.

Based on the contradictory outcomes of such initially similar states, my paper asks the following question: why may overt political religiosity be perceived to negatively impact governmental stability in the United States but not in Bangladesh? Political religiosity can be conceptually defined as how much political decision-making is affected by specific religious ideologies and my study measures this based on the extent, percentage, and enforcement of religious legislation in both states. Governmental stability can be conceptually defined as whether a population perceives their government to offer predictability in its rule and is confident

in its institutions, and I will measure this by looking at public perceptions of governmental stability in each state. In pursuing this study, I seek to bridge the cultural gap in the available literature: while extensive research has been conducted to examine the effects of political religiosity on governmental stability in Western and non-Western literature, little research exists to compare whether similar outcomes exist across cultures and why discrepancies may exist in cross-cultural contexts.

The existing literature offers three potential answers to this paper's central question. The first is that overt political religiosity may negatively affect the interests of minority religious groups, which will then likely lead to these groups distrusting the stability of their government and make them more likely to partake in contentious political action to make their voices heard. Though this political behavior component demonstrates a strong and direct effect of political religiosity on minority religious groups, the work in this area is slim, with any existing literature focusing disproportionately on religious minorities in Western democracies like the US. The next explanation for my research question is that cultural discrepancies between the West and the non-West in the definition of religious freedom may determine how populations may receive overt religiosity from their governments. While this school of thought bridges the cultural gap in the literature by explaining the inefficacy of Western efforts to advance religious freedom, its explanatory power lies with international, not domestic policy. The final potential explanation is that overt political religiosity may appear to legitimize governmental stability if religion is seen as central to defining a national identity. Though this school creates space to bridge a discussion between Western and non-Western notions of religiosity in politics, its explanatory power diminishes slightly in states with high religious plurality like the US.

Based on my review of the existing literature and data collection, I argue that the third explanation is the most effective in predicting a population's reception to overt political religiosity. If a constituency believes religion is integral to

the identity of the state and its people, overt political religiosity will be widely accepted and potentially even preferred to secular governance. On the other hand, if a constituency believes that religion is a lesser component of or wholly unrelated to the development of its national identity, overt political religiosity will likely be met with public protest and concern for the stability of state institutions. As aforementioned, though this school of thought is less effective in a state with religious plurality like the US, its efficacy in bridging the gap in understanding the role of religion in Western and non-Western politics is unparalleled as it can offer states across cultures equal explanatory power.

This paper employs case studies of the US and Bangladesh between 2017 and 2022. In examining political religiosity, I gathered data from legislative databases in both states, scholarly articles, and human rights reports. To determine how public perceptions of governmental stability are established between states, I look to public polling sources, such as the World Values Survey (WVS) and Pew Research, scholarly articles, news media outlets, and human rights reports.

The next section of this paper will examine the three potential explanations for my research question in depth, concluding with an argument in favor of religion as a marker of national identity and acknowledging how this study fills the gap in the literature. Next, I will offer an in-depth explanation of the structure and components of these case studies regarding relevant variables and methodological approaches. Then, I will outline my collected data and subsequent analysis on a case-by-case basis. To conclude, I will address the potential shortcomings of my study, acknowledge how future research may fill any gaps this study has left, and expand upon the argument presented.

Literature Review

The current body of literature poses various possible explanations for why a state's population may or may not view overt political religiosity to negatively impact governmental stability. Among these, three demonstrate the most explanatory power: the role of religion in advancing civic

and political engagement, cultural concepts of religious freedom, and the role of religion in shaping national identity. The discussion in all three dominant schools of thought is thorough, yet it typically falls short in one area: the available analysis on these potential explanations is isolated in Western or non-Western contexts. In other words, all of these explanations limit their analyses to governments and institutions that are similar to the subject of study. This limits the present analysis from crossing cultural bounds in an attempt to find a more generalizable explanation for how a public may perceive religiosity with respect to institutional stability. With this concern in mind, this paper will further explore the idea that the driving factor determining whether a population accepts or rejects political religiosity depends on whether they believe that religious identity is an integral part of establishing a greater national identity.

This literature review will examine the role of the explanations above in terms of how they shape a population's view on whether political religiosity stabilizes state institutions. According to the civic and political engagement school of thought, overt political religiosity may negatively impact the political interests of minority religious groups. This will likely lead these groups to distrust their government's ability to protect their interests and therefore negatively impact how stable these governments are perceived to be, persuading group members to take on more contentious and unpopular forms of political action in order to insert their concerns into mainstream political discussions. This school of thought offers insight into the political behavior of marginalized religious groups and demonstrates an adverse response to religiosity within government institutions. However, this area of literature is slim compared to the others, and any existing literature rests mainly on the actions of minorities in religiously pluralistic societies in which these minorities are more likely to coalesce in large enough numbers to influence political action.

Next, according to the conceptualizing religious freedom explanation, cultural definitions of religious freedom may determine how positively

or negatively overt political religiosity may be received by a nation. For instance, if a culture values the religious freedom of the individual over that of the collective, overt political religiosity may be met with much more disdain. This school of thought is particularly effective in explaining why efforts to advance international religious freedom made by Western democracies like the US have been rendered largely ineffective or even harmful, as going against a cultural view on religious freedom is likely to be met with a distaste for Western democratic practices. In doing so, this explanation is particularly effective in bridging the gap between Western and non-Western cultures in how their constituencies may receive political religiosity, but it is comparatively weaker as an explanation for domestic rather than international activity.

Lastly, the idea that religion can be seen as central in defining a national identity may explain why overt political religiosity may be better received in some states than others. If religion is seen as distinct from national identity, religiopolitical entanglement may be frowned upon, while the opposite may encourage cooperation between religion and state. Like the previous explanation, this school of thought effectively bridges the explanatory gap between Western and non-Western conceptions of political religiosity and its impact on governmental stability. However, it holds less explanatory power in societies with high religious pluralism, as it would be difficult to ascertain whether only one religion can serve national interests.

Religion as a component of national identity poses the strongest explanation for my research question, and will thus be examined in more depth throughout this paper. This school of thought's relevance lies in how it effectively explains reactions to overt political religiosity equally across various contexts. Not only does it serve its purpose in both Western and non-Western cultures, but this explanation is also widely applicable to both majority and minority religious groups within a state, and can even go so far as to explain inefficacies in both international and domestic religious policy. In other words, no one group, state, or policy initiative will fall victim

to a lack of explanatory power. Using this lens, this paper attempts to bridge the cultural gap between how religious identity may affect public perceptions of institutional stability when faced with religio-political rhetoric and policy action.

Civic and Political Engagement

According to this school of thought, a government's apparent preference toward a specific religion will likely lead to any present religious minorities feeling politically and socially marginalized. For instance, many Islamic nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the US feel that they face discriminatory pressures in accessing funding due to the salience of their distinctly religious nature in the post-9/11 climate (Noor et al., 2022). Both actual and perceived animosity toward these groups or preference toward others is likely to lead marginalized religious groups to take on more contentious political action in order to further their objectives in a political climate that appears to prefer their silence over their participation. However, such controversial action is likely to cyclically reinforce the marginalized status of these groups (Davidson & Pieper, 2019). At a minimum, contentious political action conducted by minority groups is likely to lead to further distrust of the religion that these groups are advocating for. However, the continuous dismissal of religious minority groups may push some to pursue more extreme methods to force their way into the political arena, as seen in the violent fundamentalist approaches employed by Islamist terrorist groups in the aftermath of 9/11 worldwide, including in South Asia (Ghosh, 1993). On the other hand, a government's preference toward a specific, likely majority, religion may be explicitly employed in order to mobilize these majorities to advance particular political outcomes. In some instances, such as in the US in the late 20th century, political officials may push the idea that the moral fabric of the nation is in dire need of saving and align themselves with religious officials to stir up revivalist sentiment, regardless of whether or not it is warranted in advancing policy objectives (Ahamed & Nazneen, 1990; Hummell, 2016).

The primary strength of this explanation is

that it effectively identifies sources from which both overt political religiosity and perceptions of instability may take hold, especially in weaker states. In cases where religious groups may not be able to receive comprehensive services, such as in Bangladesh with its current ultra-secular outlook, extreme religious ideologues may find it easy to fill this power vacuum and spread their ideas by providing services that the government can or will not provide to the public themselves (Griffiths & Hasan, 2015). However, this theory is not entirely applicable across contexts, as its explanatory power lies mainly with minority religious groups, and most literature focuses on these groups in the US. Despite the importance most Americans attribute to religion in social contexts, the pluralistic religious landscape will likely make a governmental preference for one religion unacceptable to the public (Reichley, 1986). In this respect, the idea that Bangladesh's religious minorities can coalesce for effective political representation with Islam's overwhelming dominance in the country should be met with skepticism.

Conceptualizing Religious Freedom

The second potential explanation for why some states may prefer overt political religiosity in governmental proceedings while others do not have to do with differing notions of religious freedom. The existing literature is dominated by a more individualistic conceptualization of religious freedom, which is most commonly seen in Western cultures. In states adhering to this version of religious freedom, such as the US, religious freedom is typically viewed as a freedom to not only practice the religion of one's choice but to also have the freedom to not practice any religion at all. This is characteristic of the trend in Western democracies to value liberalism, entailing that the foundation of religious freedom is reliant on the absence of government from an individual's religious practice. Although governments aligning with Western liberal religious freedom must distance themselves from the potential imposition of religion on their populations, they must take care to do so in a way that cannot be deemed as also hostile toward

religion (Rogers, 2004). Additionally, collective approaches to religious freedom must prioritize the individual even in aggregate efforts, such as in the protection of religious institutions and the right for religious groups to coalesce (Garnett, 2019).

In contrast, non-Western democracies such as Bangladesh view religious freedom in quite the opposite manner; freedom of religion means that there exists freedom for the government to not only be involved in religious affairs but to even actively promote and even impose religion on the populace for the collective betterment of the nation. Though this speaks to more general notions regarding the importance of religion within society or a preference toward collective over individual interests, in Bangladesh's case the rise in this sentiment can likely be attributed to a negative reaction to Western religious freedom initiatives coupled with poor democratic governance, which are inherently conflictual with local interests (Hasan, 2011).

This school of thought is particularly effective in bridging the gap between Western and non-Western thought in terms of determining why political religiosity may be viewed as an institutional stabilizer. Anti-West backlash in states such as Bangladesh is likely to be a result of Western efforts to advance international religious freedom based on a liberal definition that does not necessarily fit non-Western cultures. In doing so, Western religious freedom initiatives can potentially sully any progress non-Western governments make towards advancing religious freedom within their borders and even cause these governments to regress in this humanitarian policy area (Zellman & Fox, 2022).

Another strength of this explanation is that it is very strong in the realm of international policy, particularly in examining the exertion and efficacy of US soft power in religious freedom initiatives (Zellman & Fox, 2022). For instance, the US has a history of conflating the proliferation of religious zeal with achieving its foreign policy initiatives in an effort to preserve its hegemonic status, most evident with the Reagan administration's Latin American policy record (Marishane, 1991; Turek, 2016). However, this strength in international-

level explanation indicates a trade-off in explanatory power within domestic contexts, which is the central focus of this paper's research question. Though religious zeal has proven effective in mobilizing domestic constituencies in Latin America and even in Bangladesh (Turek, 2016), it has been analyzed in the literature as a means to achieve a broader international goal of preserving US hegemony; different definitions of religious freedom typically do not explain the differences in the appeal of religiosity when the state is insulated from international affairs.

Centrality to National Identity

The final possible explanation in the existing literature is that political religiosity may be more widely accepted if it is deemed by a population to be fundamental in developing a national identity. This acceptance may have to do with how pervasive religious influence is within a population: if religious sentiment is pervasive, it may solidify a majority group's belief that religion is inherent to state success. This sentiment allows the dominant religious group to justify the suppression of minorities within national borders. Though this suppression typically targets religious minorities when enacted by a religious majority, religious sentiment may be used to suppress the freedoms and rights of other minority demographics as well, such as marginalized ethnic groups. This suppression can take a variety of forms, such as the desire of the majority group to restrict voting rights only to populations deemed worthy, like Christian nationalist adherents in the US (Perry et al., 2022; Whitehead et al., 2018) or by eliminating political opponents, such as the case of Bangladesh and its war crimes tribunal (Islam, 2011; Islam & Islam, 2018). The perceived centrality of religion to a population's national identity can still be incredibly strong even if populations are not staunchly religious; the appeal of religious political sentiment applies just as much to adherents of lived and cultural religion as well as traditional doctrinal religion, though this appeal manifests itself very differently between these groups (Devine & White, 2013; Haque & Akhter, 1987; Stroope et al., 2021).

This school is also incredibly effective in bridging the gap between Western and non-Western cultures that exists in the literature, especially in its ability to explain the blind institutional faith that some populations exhibit under unstable and zealous governments like in Bangladesh (Askvik & Jamil, 2013). On the other hand, this school of thought can also effectively explain how perceptions of instability may be amplified more than necessary, as is the case with evangelical Protestants in the US deeming that their way of life and religious practice is under threat (Devine & White 2013; Goidel et al., 2016). However, this school of thought is less applicable in states with high religious pluralism. The comparative strength of religious minorities in Western democracies may more publicly muddle perceptions of religion's centrality to developing a national identity compared to their non-Western counterparts in states with an overwhelming majority religious group. Additionally, religion's centrality to a national identity could potentially be conflated with a more central factor, such as a common ethnic identity, in which case an ethnic group may overwhelmingly adhere to one religion (Riaz, 2018).

Conclusion

Though all three potential explanations offer compelling answers to my research question, this paper will focus on the role of religion in its centrality to national identity in depth by assessing the relationship between political religiosity and governmental stability. As aforementioned, this school of thought effectively bridges the cultural gap that currently exists in the literature regarding why some populations may prefer overt political religiosity while others are adamant that their institutions maintain a separation from church and state. In other words, this school of thought can speak for not only the affirmative, but the negation as well, as believing that religion is not central to a state's national identity means that overt political religiosity will not be supported by domestic constituencies and could even be emphatically argued against. Though this strength is not exclusive to this school of thought (in particular, the conceptualization

of religious freedom explanation is also very strong in this regard), this explanation can offer a linkage between cultures that is unparalleled due to its domestic applicability. In other words, perceptions of institutional stability amidst overt political religiosity are not contingent on external influences or ideologies that aim to alter the conditions within a nation's sovereign borders.

Additionally, this school of thought offers the most effective avenue for generalizing conclusions beyond the states included in this analysis. Rather than limiting itself to merely a US-Bangladesh framework, looking at how populations may or may not view religion to be central to their collective national identity is feasible beyond the comparison of two states and can apply more broadly as a method of comparing and contrasting the political role of religion within the Western and non-Western worlds. This explanation also ensures that not one single actor earns a disproportionate amount of explanatory power; religious minorities can be explained as well as religious majorities, pluralism can be explained as well as dominance, and domestic policy goals can be explained as effectively as those on an international scale.

Methodology

Case Selection

This project utilizes case studies of the US and Bangladesh from the period of 2017-2022. As aforementioned, this method utilizes primary and secondary sources in the process of determining the relationship between political religiosity and public perceptions of governmental stability, such as legislative records, human rights and media reports, government censuses, public polling, specifically the WVS and Pew Research Center, and academic sources. The years 2017-2022 are ideal in terms of data availability, as Bangladesh was not included in previous waves of the WVS, thereby making reliable and accurate public polling data more difficult to obtain, especially because of widespread repression and political expression within the state. Both the US and Bangladesh have experienced high levels of contention during these years

regarding religious politics, though for opposite reasons. While Bangladeshi politicians in the ruling Awami League (AL) have come under fire for ultra-secularist violence and suppression targeting public practitioners of Islam as well as discrimination against minority religions, the spike in religious sentiment in the US can be directly traced to the election of Donald Trump to the presidency in 2016. This allowed Christian nationalist sentiment to flood Republican politics in an unprecedented manner, which has been vehemently opposed by non-Republicans both within and outside the government.

At first glance, the US and Bangladesh seem to lack a standard for comparison outside of their democratic bases of governance. Yet when looking at the religious history of the two states, an interesting point of divergence exists. Both states were founded on the principles of secular governance and religious freedom, though only the US was able to maintain this structure. Less than a decade after liberation from Pakistan in 1972, Bangladeshi presidents Ziaur Rahman and H.M Ershad respectively removed secularism from the constitution and codified Islam as the state religion. Rather than oppose this shift in the fundamental values of the nation, this change was widely accepted by the Bangladeshi public, where the population is overwhelmingly Muslim. In the observed period, however, the Awami League government has been making violent pushes to reestablish secularism in the state, if only in a de facto manner. The current government has maintained power through fraudulent elections, which has aided in perpetuating the regime's ultra-secularist violent suppression of both minority religious groups and majority Islam.

The US public, on the other hand, has been generally far less forgiving toward the notion of religious sentiment in the political arena. Though Americans of all faiths generally value the social importance religion holds in stabilizing public life, many insist that the separation of church and state codified by the First Amendment holds firm (Pew Research Center, 2019). Following the 2016 election, a rise in Christian nationalist rhetoric and references made by politicians regarding religion, particularly Christianity, are typically

met with distaste or even fear for the fate of the nation as a secular democracy. So why is it that two states founded with such similar religious ideals in mind have populations that react so differently to politico-religious sentiment?

Variables

To understand the differences in public opinion toward political religiosity in the United States and Bangladesh, certain variables must be defined: political religiosity and governmental stability. Conceptually, political religiosity can be defined as a measurement of how much political decision-making is affected by specific religious ideologies. Operationally, political religiosity can be measured in a quantifiable manner through certain variables listed in "Quantifying Religion: Toward Building More Effective Ways of Measuring Religious Influence on State-Level Behavior" (2003) by Jonathan Fox and Shmuel Sandler. This paper explores the concept of political religiosity by measuring the enactment and enforcement of religious legislation in the United States and Bangladesh. Each state is valued as high, moderate, or low in the following categories: extent of religious legislation, percentage of religious legislation, and enforcement of religious legislation.

The extent to which state law is based on religious law is measured on an ordinal scale of 0-3 as follows, directly quoted from Fox and Sandler (2003; p. 582): "0"- No religious laws are legislated as law; "1"- Most aspects of the law are secular but there are some isolated instances of religious legislation; "2"- A substantial portion of the state's laws are religious or state law is based in great part on religious law but is not 100% religious law; "3"- State law is religious law (2003; p. 582). This data is collected from human rights records and academic articles.

For the percentage of religious legislation, Fox and Sandler compile a list of thirty-three types of legislation, which I have listed in the Appendix. Any legislation fitting this list is then tallied and taken as a percentage of the total legislation passed between 2017-2022. A state with less than 20% of religious legislation is of low religiosity, 20-49% is of moderate religiosity, and over 50%

of religious legislation is of high religiosity. The presence of each kind of legislation counts as one point for each instance, including when multiple relevant categories fit one piece of legislation. Though these point values do not impact the overall percentage, the inclusion of these points in my analysis is imperative to understand the nuances behind the type and ubiquity of religious governance in the state. The legislative data was gathered from the website of the US Library of Congress and the website of the Information System of the Laws of Bangladesh in their Legislative and Parliamentary Division. For the United States, I analyze bills or resolutions passing at least one chamber of Congress between the 115th-117th Congress in the “Arts, Culture, and Religion” and “Civil Rights and Liberties, Minority Issues” categories. For Bangladesh, I scraped the legal database for religious laws passed between 2017-2022, as this database did not have sufficient filtering options to narrow my search.

Lastly, the enforcement variable addresses whether codified religious legislation is actually applicable or holds more of a symbolic purpose. This variable is codified by Fox and Sandler and directly quoted as follows: “0”- No substantial restrictions exist (only coded if the extent variable is also coded as “0”); “1”- While the laws are on the books, in practice they are barely enforced; “2”- Some of the above restrictions are enforced but not others or all of them are enforced sporadically; “3”- All of the above restrictions

are enforced strictly (2003, p. 584). Any data on enforcement, like the extent variable, is gathered from human rights records and academic sources.

Figure 1 visualizes the values for each legislation category based on a state’s designation of high, moderate, or low religiosity.

Public perception of stability can be conceptually defined by whether a population perceives their government to offer predictability in its rule and is confident in its institutions. To operationalize stability pertaining to both cases, I study stability in terms of public perception. This study utilizes original variable subsets on religious importance and government opinions from Wave 7 of the World Values Survey (WVS) spanning the years 2017-2022 to determine the level to which a population’s overall religiosity guides opinions on the religiosity of institutions and the role of religion in society as well as institutional trust. I use a set of 22 questions for my analysis, which are included in the Appendix: four questions to measure religiosity and 18 to measure stability based on institutional confidence, perceptions of corruption, and election handling. These measures are employed on two religious groups in each state: the majority religion and the most dominant minority religion. In the case of the United States’s 2596 respondents, the groups studied are Christians (I split my analysis between the dominant Protestant and Catholic sects) and the religiously unaffiliated. The inclusion of both Protestants and Catholics is of note since Catholics did not settle in the US at the same time

Figure 1: Religious Legislation and Political Religiosity:

	High	Moderate	Low
Extent	3	Extent 2	Extent 0-1
% Religious Legislation	>50	% Religious Legislation 20-49	% Religious Legislation <20
Enforcement	3	Enforcement 1-2	Enforcement 0

as the founding Protestants and were scrutinized heavily for their religion. This distinction allows for some nuance in the discussion regarding the perception of Christianity as central to American national identity. For Bangladesh’s 1200 respondents, I study the responses of Muslims and Hindus in the country. In addition to the World Values Survey, public perception of institutional stability is measured through analysis of human rights reports, media accounts, academic sources, and polling data from the Pew Research Center.

United States Political Religiosity

I utilized the US Library of Congress Website to gather legislation for the period of 2017-2022. In order to do so, I narrowed my search to bills and resolutions passing either the Senate or the House of Representatives between the 115th and 117th Congressional sessions. Due to the sheer volume of legislation passed per congressional session, I narrowed my search to two relevant issue categories: “Arts, Culture, and Religion” and “Civil Rights and Liberties, Minority Issues”. With these filters implemented, I was able to gather a total of 112 pieces of legislation from the given time period. Of these 112 bills and resolutions, 16 pieces of legislation were religious in nature, amounting to approximately 14% of the total legislation passed during this period. This collection of legislation consisted of three bills and 13 resolutions. It is important to note that while congressional resolutions are included in this analysis, their influence is less tangible

in practice, as a majority of these resolutions are simple resolutions that only apply to one chamber of Congress. One joint resolution, with a similar level of efficacy as a bill, was included in my analysis. Of all 16 pieces of legislation, one point was administered to the No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion Insurance Full Disclosure Act of 2017 (H.R. 7) for a restriction imposed on the accessibility of abortion.

The US public demonstrates an understanding of religious discrimination within the nation, generally acknowledging that religious minorities, particularly Muslims and religiously unaffiliated individuals (sometimes referred to as “nones” or “religious nones”), face regular discrimination. However, perceptions of the level and victims of discrimination, as well as the role Christianity should play in government as the state’s dominant religion, are somewhat contingent on political party identification (Lipka, 2020; Masci, 2019; Tevington, 2020). For instance, members of the Republican party are much more likely to be more partial towards Christianity in government than their Democrat counterparts. Republicans also are more likely to believe that Christians and evangelicals face considerable amounts of discrimination. Democrats, who are considered the more secular party in US politics, oppose the notion that evangelical Christians are discriminated against, contending that religious minorities such as Jews and Muslims are much more likely to face discrimination in public life. Heightened worries regarding the religiosity of government are further enforced by feelings that government institutions, particularly the

Figure 2: Political Religiosity in the United States

Extent	1 (low)
% Religious Legislation	14% (low)
Enforcement	2 (moderate)

Supreme Court, are becoming increasingly friendly toward religion and crossing rigid constitutional boundaries (Tevington, 2020). Such an inclination is due in part to the current conservative majority in the highest court and their deviation from precedent in recent rulings regarding family planning and government regulation of sexuality that appear indicative of religious influence (Marshall et al., 2021).

In terms of the role of religion in public life, Americans vary on whether or not they believe the influence of religion is waning. In this debate, Republicans and a majority of Christians are more likely to be wary of this waning influence (Lipka, 2019; Pew Research Center, 2019). These groups are more prone to believing in a distorted threat to their religious liberty, a perception that is exacerbated by increased preference toward partisan news that exclusively reinforces these views (Goidel et al., 2016). Much of this debate is rooted in whether the US is or should be a “Christian nation” and what such a designation would mean if applied (Pew Research Center, 2022). Supporters of designating the US as a “Christian nation” generally argue that such a designation would not explicitly include legislation and government proceedings dictated by Christianity but rather a societal prioritization of Christian values and morality. Yet disagreement exists within the Christian population as to what a Christian America would look like, with the most vocal group being Christian nationalist evangelical Protestants. This group regularly pushes for religious influence in legislation and government, adamant that the US be a Christian nation in practice, not merely in principle. This desire to establish a “Christian nation” is rooted in negative views toward and even fear of religious diversity. Christian nationalists are much more likely to justify voter suppression and discrimination on religious as well as racial, gender, and sexuality bases, while also insisting that voter suppression does not exist and that any existence would harm white Christian voters (Perry et al., 2022). It should come as no surprise that denial of voter suppression and the heavy Christian nationalist rhetoric evident in Donald Trump’s campaign for the presidency bolstered

his electoral support in the 2016 election, with Christian nationalism being a strong predictor of a Trump vote (Whitehead et al., 2018).

An analysis of religiosity in the US would be incomplete without considering its projection of religious freedom ideology abroad in an international system based on American hegemony. The US is notorious for using religious freedom initiatives, primarily the Office of International Religious Freedom under the International Religious Freedom (IRF) Act, as a projection of soft power abroad. Yet this approach usually pushes for Western ideals of political secularism, a method that has proven counterintuitive in many societies targeted by this objective. As a result, many groups like the Religious Freedom Institute call for approaches that emphasize religious neutrality rather than political secularism (Marshall et al., 2021). Yet the general consensus is that the exertion of US soft power under IRF initiatives has been largely ineffective in reducing religious discrimination abroad, with democracies monitored under these initiatives instead demonstrating more religious discrimination and instability (Zellman & Fox, 2022).

Based on these findings, I have designated the US with the following religiosity values in Figure 2.

Public Perceptions of Governmental Stability

For the US, the WVS recorded responses from 2596 participants. This analysis’s focus on Christians from Protestant and Catholic sects along with the religiously unaffiliated accounts for 2267 of these respondents, or approximately 87% of the US population. Protestants accounted for 519 respondents and Catholics numbered at 600, making for 1119 respondents from the Christian denominations selected. Those unaffiliated with a specific religious label numbered 1148 and constitute the majority of respondents in this analysis.

There is a general consensus among the US public that too much entanglement of religion and politics, particularly in the area of morality issues, will lead to institutional destabilization (Reichley, 1986). According to the WVS,

approximately 60.7% of Americans attribute some personal importance to religion, with 37.1% of respondents believing it to be “very important” and 23.6% believing it to be “rather important”. When crossing the analysis by religious denomination, Protestants typically answered with much greater adherence to religiosity than their Catholic or unaffiliated counterparts. For instance, 85.5% of Protestants said that religion was “rather important” or “very important” to their personal lives compared to 77.3% of Catholics and 39.7% of religiously unaffiliated respondents. Additionally, Protestants are much more active in religious organizations, with 54.6% of Protestants actively participating in churches compared to 40.9% of Catholics and 15.4% of religiously unaffiliated. This rate of religious participation is markedly higher than the national average of 32.3%. However, while Protestants appear much more active in their religious fervor, they are also much less likely than their observed counterparts to want religious governance or legal interpretation. For the former, Protestants deviated the most from the national average of 18.8% believing that religious governance was a good idea for the US, scoring 12.5% agreement. In addition to the WVS data, the Pew Research Center indicates that 49% of the US believes that the Bible should influence policy-making and 45% believe Christianity should be the state religion (Lipka, 2020).

All three groups analyzed with the WVS data demonstrated low institutional confidence. The only exceptions to this pattern were trust in the armed forces and police, with trust ratings remarkably higher than other political and social institutions. Protestants typically scored higher in trust ratings across all institutional categories than Catholics and the unaffiliated. This general distrust is paralleled by high perceptions of corruption within the country. On a scale of 1-10, with a ranking of 1 being “There is no corruption in my country” and a ranking of 10 being “There is abundant corruption in my country”, those surveyed in the US responded with a mean ranking of 7.91, indicating a rather widespread belief that institutional corruption exists on a large scale. Even then, Protestants demonstrated

marginally lower rates of belief that state and local authorities are corrupt, ranking approximately three to four percentage points below their Catholic and religiously unaffiliated counterparts. A majority of respondents demonstrated at least some confidence in the election process across all three religious groups, with Protestants more likely to believe in election fairness and less likely to believe in the presence of voter intimidation in the country.

Analysis

The American public generally demonstrates a consensus as to the constitutional role of religion as one separate from the affairs of the state. Although the US public indicates a desire to separate religious and political matters as much as possible, it does not mean that they want to eliminate religious influence from all corners of life. Rather, Americans have consistently exhibited an understanding of the importance of any kind of religion as a key social marker, as it ties citizens to a broader notion of morality and goodwill expected within American society. Even still, this social importance does not (and in the eyes of the public, can not) spill over into the political realm.

Throughout this analysis, it was expected that Protestants would demonstrate a stronger desire to implement religious influence into the US’s political affairs due to their unique historical ties to the founding of the nation. However, the findings of this study actually prove the contrary, with Protestants overall being demonstrably more opposed to religious influence in politics than other majority religious groups in the country. Yet this opposition fits remarkably well with the historical tie to the nation’s founding, as Puritan Protestants fled for the US from England due to religious persecution. Settlement in the US was fueled by a need to escape the predatory hand of a government reliant on religion for legitimacy and practice religion as one so chose, so it is understandable that the colonists wanted a separation of religious and governmental affairs to avoid reliving their historical memory of persecution and corrupt religious governance (Edwards, 2015). This historical memory appears

to live on within the current generation of Protestants over four hundred years since the original settlement. The WVS data indicates that when asked to rank the religious interpretation of national law as a fundamental characteristic of democracy, with 10 indicating that it is essential for religious authorities to interpret laws, Protestants responded with a mean of 2.88 compared to the national average of 4.53.

Protestants are also an interesting case in modern US politics, as spikes in religiosity within this group fall in line with higher perceptions of governmental stability in recent years. Compared to their Catholic and religiously unaffiliated counterparts, Protestant respondents demonstrate significantly higher perceptions of election fairness and lower corruption of authorities at the state and local levels. Yet their religious history indicates that such a relationship should not occur given the religious rhetoric that generally surrounds recent US elections. In this case, it can be posited that Protestants may demonstrate higher levels of institutional trust precisely because of their historical ties to the nation's founding, even if broader analysis contradicts these notions. Protestants may be more likely to look past institutional failings than other religious groups because the fundamental tenets of US democracy might be more deeply engrained in their psyche compared to other religious denominations, though this prediction warrants further analysis before establishing such a link.

Bangladesh Political Religiosity

To examine religiosity in Bangladesh, I used the website for the Information System of the Laws of Bangladesh under the Bangladesh government's Legislative and Parliamentary Division. Since there was no filtering mechanism on this website like that of the US Library of Congress, I took a total count of laws passed between 2017-2022, which amounted to 172 total laws. Of these 172 laws, nine of them were religious in nature, or approximately 5% of laws passed during this time. These nine laws accumulated 13 total points according to

the Fox and Sandler (2003) list. Eleven of these points fell into the following categories: funding religious organizations, presence of and funding for a ministry for religious affairs, and funding for religious education. The other two points not in these categories were attributed to the Digital Security Act 2018. This law has been scrutinized heavily by human rights organizations, as its vague language can potentially lead to the repression of unpopular political and religious opinions and even result in legal ramifications for blasphemy (Religious Freedom Institute, 2020, p. 20). For this, the Digital Security Act 2018 received one point for acting as a potential blasphemy safeguard and one point for censoring anti-religious speech.

According to the Religious Freedom Landscape Report 2020 for Bangladesh by the Religious Freedom Institute, the Bangladesh government has enacted a broad reach of legislation "restricting religious speech, exercising strong governance over Islam, banning religious parties, condemning religious violence disproportionately, and repressing political opponents" (Religious Freedom Institute, 2020, p. 9). One of the most notable pieces of this type of legislation is the Vested Property Act of 1965, which is referenced repeatedly across the body of literature. At the time of enactment, the Vested Property Act was used to confiscate the property of Hindus fleeing the borders of Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) for refuge in India during the Second Kashmir War. Property holders and their descendants have since taken part in countless legal battles to regain ownership of their property, especially after the repeal of the Act. However, under the new Vested Property Return Act of 2001, Hindus and other religious minorities have been slow to have their land returned by the government. Many contend that this may not necessarily be due to malicious discrimination, but instead due to an amalgamation of other factors, including but not limited to ineffective land registry systems, insufficient political representation and prominence of religious minorities, and government indifference toward reallocating property (Office of International Religious Freedom, 2022).

Religious minorities in Bangladesh have also suffered from high levels of discrimination and intimidation by both the government and, more violently, Islamic militants. According to the same Religious Freedom Institute report, the AL government has become increasingly hostile to religious displays of any kind, whether they be from minority religious groups or Islam practitioners. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), the main opposition party in government, continues to coalesce with religious and Islamist groups in the parliament to dull the ultra-secular AL leadership in order to preserve Islamic sentiment in Bangladeshi society. Yet with the rise of Islamist militancy in the country coupled with a need to seek justice from the time of the Liberation War of 1971, the AL government has used the recent war crimes tribunal to convict and execute prominent leaders of the BNP and other opposition parties. This has been done in the name of punishing traitors against the Bangladeshi liberation cause, despite the fact that those accused did not demonstrate traitorous behavior at the time of national liberation.

The 2021 International Religious Freedom (IRF) Report conducted by the US State Department addressed certain areas of concern regarding the AL government simultaneously endorsing and suppressing religion within national borders. Governmental harassment of human rights organizations following human rights violations has been widespread. For instance, the government has refused to renew the licensing of Odhikar Human Rights Group, a decision that has been met with tremendous

domestic and international backlash. This refusal to allow Odhikar to continue functioning follows the group's exposition of exposing human rights abuses and violence conducted by the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) during the war crimes tribunal (Human Rights Watch, 2022). This controversy was met with US sanctions and international scorn, which in turn exacerbated harassment of religious converts and minorities and refusal to relicense human rights groups like Odhikar. Critics contend that this treatment of human rights advocates in Bangladesh not only poses a concern for keeping US political and financial support (Mahmud, 2022), but is an "imminent threat to national security or public order" (Amnesty International, 2022, para. 4). Aside from NGO and human rights organization harassment, the IRF Report includes governmental funding of mosques, madrassas (Islamic schools), and imam training as other areas of concern, with imams in particular hesitant to preach anything that may go against the preferred government messaging. More broadly, Bangladesh's penal code has raised concerns regarding religious and secular speech, as recent developments have shown a tendency to suppress seemingly anti-Islamic activity, particularly in online forums. The penal code includes provisions for imprisoning those demonstrating a "deliberate and malicious" intent to insult religion, and application of these provisions have mainly targeted instances of anti-Islamic speech, especially speech regarding the Prophet Muhammad (Religious Freedom Institute, 2020, p. 18).

Figure 3: Political Religiosity in Bangladesh

Extent	1 (low)
% Religious Legislation	5% (low)
Enforcement	2 (moderate)

Based on these findings, I have designated Bangladesh with the following religiosity values in Figure 3.

Public Perceptions of Governmental Stability

For Bangladesh, the WVS recorded data from 1200 respondents. The two religious groups chosen for this analysis were Muslims as the majority religion, constituting 1081 respondents, and Hindus as the dominant minority religion, constituting an additional 109 respondents. These two groups thus amounted to a whopping 1190 total respondents (99%) for this analysis, just short of the entire observable population of Bangladesh.

The Bangladesh public is overwhelmingly supportive of religion in public life. Almost the entire population attributes at least some importance to religion in their personal lives at approximately 99% of respondents. Most of the population keeps their religious adherence private and personal, as 78.4% of the public is either inactive in or does not belong to a religious organization. Both religious groups contend that it is somewhat essential for democracies to have laws interpreted by religious authorities, with mean values of 7.63 for Muslims and 7.27 for Hindus. Additionally, Hindus score approximately ten percent below the national average of 54.6% in believing that a political system governed by religious law is beneficial. This is likely due to the marginalized status of Hindus in Bangladesh, as a religious governance system would likely entail Islamic governance and thus exacerbate the lack of Hindu representation in government.

In terms of stability, both religious groups demonstrate generally high levels of confidence in political institutions. However, confidence levels regarding political parties and police are startlingly low, with both institutions receiving less than 50% approval. While Muslims demonstrate more confidence in justice institutions than Hindus, such as those of the police and civil services, Hindus demonstrate more confidence in government and electoral institutions. This confidence in Bangladesh's election system is confounding, as recent reports have labeled recent elections as overtly corrupt and rife with

intimidation by the Awami League (Religious Freedom Institute, 2020). This inconsistency is remedied in part because of the pervasive belief that election outcomes and practices are often tampered with and are therefore untrustworthy. Similar levels of corruption are perceived within state, local, and civil authorities. This is likely due to the AL government's aggressive elimination of political opponents through the guise of the war crimes tribunal, which has been deemed a front in order to eradicate the notably more Islamic BNP from political prominence and silence other opposing political parties through fear. This conflict between Islam and secularism at the parliamentary level has resulted in extreme government dysfunction that has manifested itself in the BNP boycotting a string of corrupt AL elections (Religious Freedom Institute, 2020).

Religious minority groups face discrimination and are silenced in all walks of life due to unstable and violent institutions in Bangladesh. According to the 2021 IRF Report, these minority groups remain uncertain as to whether the recent string of land disputes and property eviction is merely due to their collective lack of political and financial power to combat these disputes or whether they may be due to "deliberate government discrimination against religious minorities[,]... [and] government inefficiency" (Section II, para. 32). Religious minority groups have also faced harassment in houses of worship and on social media. Regarding the latter, the AL government claims to remove and suppress posts that can be deemed provocative or incendiary, though human rights groups have noticed a pattern to use such monitoring policies as subversive moves to silence political rivals on the Internet. Active suppression of minority voices by the government is particularly concerning when considering the Bangladesh government's history of violently suppressing dissidents and intimidating human rights workers. The government also demonstrates a consistent aversion to taking accountability for any acts of political violence, which may imply a potential underreporting of invasive and violent practices used to suppress political opponents than are available for this analysis (Human Rights Watch,

2022).

Analysis

Based on the available data, Bangladeshi citizens appear to confirm Askvik and Jamil's (2013) "institutional trust paradox". Though the public is not blind to the corruption of government officials and holds low opinions of certain institutional bodies, Bangladeshis still hold surprisingly high levels of trust in the stability of a majority of government processes and institutions. Perceptions of institutional stability do not align with the actual condition of these institutions, which are riddled with dysfunction and intimidatory practices. Given that the AL government undertakes pervasive and violent practices to suppress any religious presence in both public and private life, it is questionable as to how citizens may demonstrate such high trust levels in institutions that have demonstrated contempt for their religious livelihood time and time again. The current government demonstrates policy inconsistencies as well; the Awami League's ultra-secularist goals have consistently come to fruition through policies that advance Islam over other religions, an odd condition given the violent suppression of public Islamic displays.

Another point of confusion exists in Hindu satisfaction with the government even when considering their marginalization. Despite Hindu citizens facing higher rates of persecution, discrimination, and bureaucratic inefficiency in Bangladesh, this group generally displays higher rates of governmental satisfaction than Muslims. Many authors contend that this may be due to the Awami League's pro-India policy, yet this explanation should not hold any weight with ethnically Bangladeshi Hindus. If anything, this preference toward AL politics is likely due to a case of distrust in the BNP, a party largely supported by the Muslim majority due to their distinctly Islamic policy tone. Muslims, on the other hand, may still have faith in the efficacy of the AL government because of policies and practices that subversively further Islam in the country. They may trust that even if the government is against Islam at the governmental level, these policies may hint that Islam will

always reign in the land. Even if Muslims oppose the public denouncement of Islam and religion in general, this implicit bias offers practitioners of the majority religion that their religious liberty and practice will never truly be under threat.

Conclusions

The central question this study sought to answer was: why may overt political religiosity be perceived to negatively impact governmental stability in the United States but not in Bangladesh? Based on the presented findings, overt political religiosity is more likely to be widely accepted in a state if its population perceives religion as central to developing a national identity. However, the effect of religiosity on perceptions of governmental stability may be unfounded, as religious sentiment may allow a government to justify any citizen abuse and other destabilizing gestures that contradict constitutional principles. Yet the proliferation of religious influence on the political stage is less likely to occur in a religiously pluralistic society where a consensus on a monolithic religious identity is much less likely to be established. This might allow these societies to be less blindsided by contradictory perceptions of stability, since an inability to agree on religion's role in the state will enlighten the population to the government's ill-willed uses of religious rhetoric. With this study in particular, Bangladesh and the US exhibit similar political religiosity scores of low percentages and extent and moderate enforcement of religious legislation, despite very different perceptions of stability and legislative docket.

In the case of the United States, religious pluralism makes overt religious sentiment in politics mostly unacceptable among a majority of religious groups. Such is even true for mainline Protestants, the dominant religious group in the country and the one with the closest historical ties to the nation's founding, and thus most expected to desire religious sentiment in government to perceive its institutions as stable. Protestants are generally less likely to accept religiosity in government than other groups in the United States specifically due to their ties to the establishment of the nation, even though their interests are

most likely to be represented fairly by religious political influence. This is due to the central belief that the US is a nation of both freedom and diversity of religion and that this freedom must be maintained. This desire for separation of church and state is thus bolstered due to their historical memory of religious persecution that led to the colonization of the US, making this group likely to believe that it is better to adhere to secular constitutional principles than enforce a Protestant ethic in government practices. Additionally, Protestants are also likely to be wary of overt political religiosity due to its potential to encourage tyrannical and unjust religious rhetoric in the name of preserving the nature of America. On the other hand, evangelical Protestants that are partial to Christian nationalist rhetoric, who have become much more vocal during the studied period, are much more likely to believe in the idea that the US is inherently a Christian nation and are thus more likely to believe religious influence in government as legitimate and stabilizing.

Bangladesh's overwhelming Muslim majority is much more likely to accept the role of overt political religiosity in stabilizing government institutions. In the ever-persistent debate between Bengali versus Bangladeshi nationalism (or ethnolinguistic versus religious nationalism), the latter concept is crucial in tying Bangladeshi citizens to the Islamic culture of the nation. This is reinforced by national opposition to the current ultra-secular violence being wrought by the AL government: a secular government cannot exercise legitimacy through violence, so it is reasonable that the population would prefer religious governance in hopes to quell the unrest. Yet religious rhetoric is ubiquitous in Bangladesh's political affairs, even within the ostensibly secular Awami League, though this party typically perverts Islamic sentiment to fit its violent suppression of religion in public life, a practice to which the population is staunchly opposed. The current government fails to advance the well-being of any religious group in Bangladesh; while minority religious groups would theoretically benefit from more secular governance (and thus prefer AL policies), in practice the mix of the current secularization

strategy mixed with distorted Islamic rhetoric perpetuates the harassment and persecution faced by these groups. Yet despite the evident opposition to the government's current policy regarding religion in any form, this opposition is likely to not be very public due to fears of governmental intimidation or persecution.

This study poses several limitations. Most broadly, the generalizability of my findings is limited due to the qualitative nature of the project and the narrow case studies employed. Additionally, the independent variable and dependent variable compare different levels of analysis, with political religiosity being determined at the state level and public perceptions of stability measured at a domestic group level. This incongruence in levels of analysis, though not a major concern for a qualitative study, may pose problems if replicated in a quantitative nature. It is also worth noting that both states exhibit very similar religiosity scores, though each state's domestic population demonstrates very different perceptions of stability. This is likely due to a historical disconnect between the two states, with US citizens citing memories of religious persecution at the time of founding to establish a consensus on the role of religion in politics, while Bangladesh's collective liberation trauma was based not on religion, but in the formerly East Pakistan's ethnic and linguistic marginalization. This difference may also be a result of the type of religiosity measurement used. The religious legislation variable was meant by Fox and Sandler (2003) to work in conjunction with discrimination, regulation, and restriction variables to offer a more comprehensive image of a state's religiosity; the use of the legislation variable alone reduces any available nuance to a point value, resulting in an incomplete picture of the religious nature of national politics. Additionally, the ability to filter legislative categories in the legislative database for the US but not for Bangladesh likely inflated the level of religious legislation enacted in the former. Lastly, Bangladesh's polling data in particular may be subject to more scrutiny than that of the US, as the repressive nature of state institutions combined with fears of governmental intimidation and

persecution may have led respondents to not accurately report their perception of the state's stability, instead inflating their satisfaction with the current government.

Future studies would benefit not just from qualitative replication, but expanding into quantitative methods to establish more generalizable conclusions regarding the relationship between political religiosity and perceptions of institutional stability. A quantitative version of this study would not only allow for expansion upon Fox and Sandler's variables in a two-state analysis but would also open opportunities to conduct multi-state analyses of Western and non-Western states. If time permits during a future study, the true value of religious legislation in the US without filtering mechanisms should be determined as closely as possible. Additionally, given that Protestants in the US and Bengali and Bangladeshi nationalists demonstrate different perceptions of governmental stability due to overt political religiosity, future research would benefit from examining the reception of religiosity within rather than just between religious groups, as this study has made evident that perceptions of religiosity may not even be monolithic within majority religious groups.

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Appendix

Specific Types of Legislation (Fox & Sandler, 2003, pp. 582-584)

All descriptions are worth one point each:

- Dietary laws (restrictions on the production, import, selling, or consumption of specific foods other than alcoholic beverages).
- Restrictions or prohibitions on the sale of alcoholic beverages.
- Personal status defined by clergy (i.e. marriage, divorce, and/or burial can only occur under religious auspices.)
- Laws of inheritance defined by religion.
- Restrictions on conversions away from the dominant religion.
- Restrictions on interfaith marriages.
- Restrictions on public dress.
- Blasphemy laws, or any other restriction on speech about religion or religious figures.
- Censorship of press or other publications on grounds of being anti-religious.
- Mandatory closing of some or all businesses during religious holy days, including the Sabbath or its equivalent.
- Other restrictions on activities during religious holidays including the Sabbath or its equivalent (e.g. “blue laws”).*
- Religious education as standard in public schools. (Code also if it is possible to opt out of this.)
- Mandatory religious education in public schools. (Code if all students must have some form of religious education; non-religious ethics or philosophy courses do not count as religious education. If this category is coded, also code the above category).
- Government funding of religious schools or religious educational programs in secular schools.
- Government funding of religious charitable organizations.
- Government collection of taxes on behalf of religious organizations (religious taxes).
- Official government positions, salaries, or other funding for clergy.
- Funding for religious organizations or activities other than those listed above.*
- Clergy and/or speeches in places of worship require government approval.
- Some official clerical positions made by government appointment.
- Presence of an official government ministry or department dealing with religious affairs.
- Certain religious officials become government officials by virtue of their religious position (i.e. as in Iran).
- Certain government officials are also given an official position in the state church by virtue of their political office (i.e. the Queen of England is also head of Anglican Church).
- Some or all government officials must meet certain religious requirements in order to hold office (this excludes positions in religious ministries, head of state church, or the like).
- Presence of religious courts which have jurisdiction over some matters of law.
- Seats in legislative branch and/or cabinet are by law or custom granted, at least in part, along religious lines.
- Prohibitive restrictions on abortion.
- The presence of religious symbols on the state’s flag.
- Religion listed on state identity cards.
- Religious organizations must register with government in order to obtain official status.
- Presence of an official government body which monitors “sects” or minority religions.
- Restrictions on women other than those listed above (i.e. restrictions on education, jobs that they can hold, or on appearing in public without a chaperone).*
- Other religious prohibitions or practices that are mandatory.*

[Any categories marked by an asterisk (*) meant to cover other types of religious restrictions not anticipated by the authors.]

World Values Survey Questions

1. *Q6.- Important in life: Religion (For each of the following aspects, indicate how important it is in your life. Would you say it is very important, rather important, not very important or not important at all: Religion)
2. Q64.- Confidence: Churches (I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them: is it a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence or none at all?:The Churches (mosque, temple etc.))
3. Q65.- Confidence: Armed Forces (I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them: is it a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence or none at all?: The armed forces)
4. Q69.- Confidence: The Police (I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them: is it a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence or none at all?: The police)
5. Q70.- Confidence: Justice System/Courts (I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them: is it a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence or none at all?: The courts)
6. Q71.- Confidence: The Government (I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them: is it a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence or none at all?: The government (in your nation's capital))
7. Q72.- Confidence: The Political Parties (I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them: is it a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence or none at all?: Political Parties)
8. Q73.- Confidence: Parliament (I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them: is it a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence or none at all?: Parliament)
9. Q74.- Confidence: The Civil Services (I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them: is it a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence or none at all?: The Civil Services)
10. Q76.- Confidence: Elections (I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them: is it a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence or none at all?: Elections)
11. *Q94.- Active/Inactive membership: church or religious org (Now I am going to read out a list of voluntary organizations; for each one, could you tell me whether you are a member, an active member, an inactive member or not a member of that type of organization?: Church or religious organization)
12. Q112.- Perceptions of corruption in the country (Now I'd like you to tell me your views on corruption – when people pay a bribe, give a gift or do a favor to other people in order to get the things they need done or the services they need. How would you place your views on corruption in [your country] on a 10-point scale where “1” means “there is no corruption in [my country]” and “10” means “there is abundant corruption in [my country]”. If your views are somewhat mixed, choose the appropriate number in between.)
13. Q113.- Involved in corruption: State authorities (Among the following groups of people, how many do you believe are involved in corruption?. Tell me for each group if you believe it is none of them, few of them, most of them or all of them?: State authorities)

14. Q115.- Involved in corruption: Local authorities (Among the following groups of people, how many do you believe are involved in corruption?. Tell me for each group if you believe it is none of them, few of them, most of them or all of them?: Local authorities)

15. Q116: Involved in corruption: Civil service providers (Among the following groups of people, how many do you believe are involved in corruption?. Tell me for each group if you believe it is none of them, few of them, most of them or all of them?: Civil service providers (police, judiciary, civil servants, doctors, teachers))

16. Q224.- How often in country's elections: Votes are counted fairly (In your view, how often do the following things occur in this country's elections?: Votes are counted fairly)

17. Q225.- How often in country's elections: Opposition candidates are prevented from running (In your view, how often do the following things occur in this country's elections?: Opposition candidates are prevented from running)

18. Q230.- How often in country's elections: Rich people buy elections (In your view, how often do the following things occur in this country's elections?: Rich people buy elections)

19. Q231.- How often in country's elections: Voters are threatened with violence at the polls (In your view, how often do the following things occur in this country's elections?: Voters are threatened with violence at the polls)

20. Q232.- How often in country's elections: Voters are offered a genuine choice in the elections (In your view, how often do the following things occur in this country's elections?: Voters are offered a genuine choice in the elections)

21. *Q239.- Political system: Having a system governed by religious law in which there are no political parties or elections (I'm going to describe various types of political systems and ask what you think about each as a way of governing this country. For each one, would you say it is a very good, fairly good, fairly bad or very bad way of governing this country?: Having a system governed by religious law in which there are no political parties or elections)

22. *Q242.- Democracy: Religious authorities interpret the laws (Please tell me for each of the following things how essential you think it is as a characteristic of democracy. Use this scale where 1 means "not at all an essential characteristic of democracy" and 10 means it definitely is "an essential characteristic of democracy: Religious authorities interpret the laws)

[Questions marked with an asterisk (*) are religiosity questions, the rest are stability questions.]