Xi's China. Wolf suggests that this approach was cynically cooked up in the (vastly expanded) presidential palace; yet, there was much more of the trial and error, uncertainty, and lack of coordination that Wolf attributes to the regime in its dying days. After all, "even many regime insiders said they did not know how much pluralism Ben Ali initially had in mind" (p. 49). As the disarray that attended the end of his regime suggests, planning is rarely the only or even the most important cause of a political effect.

That said, by the time Ben Ali's regime was consolidated and his opponents sidelined, the party renamed and retrofitted for his purposes, a cadre of "lumpen activists" (p. 94) recruited to act as enforcers, and a public relations machine fired up to sell the country as a modern, technocratic miracle on the Mediterranean friendly to women's rights and tourist revenue alike, Ben Ali was set to enjoy more than a decade of relative calm. Ideas of pluralism fell by the wayside, replaced by the far more expedient embrace of antiterrorism and economic growth, thereby lifting pressure for any genuine democratic reform.

Academic studies of the Middle East pioneered the notion of "authoritarian upgrading" to account for the unusual resilience of the region's autocracies during the post–Cold War "Third Wave" of democratization, and the first decade or so of the Ben Ali regime seemed to reflect such a process. He and his associates captured the ruling party and became increasingly proficient at high-tech surveillance. However, Wolf shows that, like many of its regional counterparts, the regime grew increasingly self-absorbed and inattentive as the ruler aged. Indeed, among the many merits of this book is its insistence on the accumulation of small-scale changes in an apparently stable autocracy that ultimately contributed to its surprising weakness when pushed by popular protests in 2011. Ben Ali squandered much of his political authority in promoting his family's business interests; by the mid-2000s, the children and in-laws of his notoriously acquisitive second wife had their fingers in business interests across the economy.

By the early 2000s, aging autocrats began to confront their inevitable demise across the Middle East and North Africa. Jordan's King Hussein replaced his brother as crown prince with his son shortly before he died in 1999, and ostensibly republican Syria saw a transition from father to son when Hafez al-Assad died in 2000. Grooming sons, as both Egypt's Mubarak and Libya's Qaddafi also appeared to be doing, was increasingly common—and increasingly resented by the regimes' old guard. Ben Ali's only son, born in 2005, was too young to be a plausible successor, but by 2010 two sons-in-law were amassing political allies and personal wealth at a brisk clip, much to the dismay of party stalwarts and traditional economic elites.

As Wolf shows, when popular expressions of frustration at economic stagnation and growing unemployment grew into protests against the regime at the end of that year, local party officials did little to counter them; some even joined in the demonstrations. Economic grievances against the president's family meant that business elites sat on their hands, and the uprising soon spun out of control. Here Wolf gives ample and appropriate attention to contingency. The panicky decision making that led Ben Ali to leave the country with his family highlights the role of individual agency and chance: although Ben Ali planned to fly back to Tunis the next day, his personal pilot returned without him after seeing a TV broadcast of the prime minister's announcement that Ben Ali was "temporarily incapable of exercising power."

Without gainsaying the role of the popular protests in bringing down Ben Ali's government, Wolf shows that cracks in the regime created openings that the protesters could exploit. In this, the Tunisian story is not unlike its Egyptian and Libyan counterparts—and is a marked contrast to Syria, in which a younger ruler rallied a more robust and cohesive regime to resist a popular revolt. Better appreciating the role of the elite in shaping when and how the president left office certainly helps make sense of subsequent events, in Tunis and elsewhere.

Ideas are useful mobilizational tools; regimes change over time; elite bargains unravel. Wolf has persuasively illustrated the importance of these apparently simple propositions in explaining politics in autocracies. Although she might have made more of the contingent character of many of the processes she describes—What if the signatories of the National Pact had been less gullible or if Ben Ali's wife had been less engaged?—she conveys in fascinating detail the decisions on which the establishment, resilience, and demise of the Ben Ali regime rested. In doing so, Wolf deepens our understanding of politics and policy making in authoritarian regimes.

The Godless Crusade: Religion, Populism and Right-Wing Identity Politics in the West. By Tobias Cremer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023. 335p. $90.00 cloth, $29.99 paper.

Worldly Politics and Divine Institutions: Contemporary Entanglement of Faith and Government. By Nashon Perez. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023. 194p. $83.00 cloth.

Beyond the Death of God: Religion in 21st Century International Politics. Edited by Simone Raudino and Patricia Sohn. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2022. 425p. $90.00 cloth, $44.95 paper.
doi:10.1017/S1537592723003092

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If social scientists once routinely assumed secularization as the dominant framework to understand the relationship

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592723003092 Published online by Cambridge University Press

between religion and the state, it now seems just as commonplace for scholars to examine the resurgence of religion and politics and to assert the death of secularization theory. It is clear that the demise of public religion did not happen in the ways that secularization theory imagined. Still, few countries have been unaffected by the modernization–secularization nexus, and many others (Western Europe, Australia, North America) have experienced a rapid decline in religiosity and a gradual separation of state and religious authorities. The challenge for social scientists is to avoid methodological simplifications and carefully examine a more complicated world where religion can be challenged by secular trends while remaining a significant factor in global politics. The three works under review meaningfully contribute to this emerging literature.

In his outstanding book, *The Godless Crusade,* Tobias Cremer skillfully examines the rise of right-wing populist parties in Germany, France, and the United States and the role of religion in those movements. Based on an analysis of survey data and in-depth interviews with 114 populist leaders, policy makers, and faith leaders in the three countries, Cremer contends that rising rates of immigration, rapid ethnic change, individualization, and increased levels of secularization created "fertile ground in the electorate for national populist movements" (p. 21). These "demand side factors" created a new political cleavage that pits cosmopolitans—those who embrace globalism, multiculturalism, and diversity—from communitarians who define national identity based on a shared ethnicity, culture, history, and language. The rise of this identity-based divide corresponds with the decline of class and religiously based social divisions (p. 34). Bolstered by this emerging identity cleavage, populist leaders across the Atlantic use "Christian symbols and language as cultural identity markers, while remaining distanced from Christian doctrine, ethics, and institutions" (p. 36). The use of religious rhetoric by populist leaders is instrumental: the intent is to reinforce identity-based cleavages, rather than to revitalize religion.

The electoral success of these populist appeals among Christian voters, Cremer argues, is a result of "supply side" differences among the three countries. Cremer notes that divergent political institutions "shape the opportunity structures for national populist movements to emerge" (p. 24) and that the willingness of religious leaders to either "challenge or legitimize national populists' use of religion" was a key factor in the "different reactions of German, French, and American Christians to the populist right" (pp. 43–44). In France and Germany, those variables undermined Christian support for the Far Right. In Germany, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) offered an alternative party home for Christian voters, while religious leaders of the dominant churches consistently condemned the use of religious rhetoric by the populist right. The result is that populist parties are "most successful amongst irreligious voters and non-practicing 'cultural Christians,' whereas practicing Christians remain comparatively 'immune' to such appeals (p. 41).

At first glance, the vaccination effect of religion seems not as strong in the United States where Donald Trump performed exceptionally well among white evangelicals in both 2016 and 2020. Cremer invokes supply-side factors to explain the transatlantic differences. Although they were initially resistant to Trump, religiously affiliated voters softened their opposition for two reasons. First, the perception that the Democratic Party was increasingly secular and hostile to religion meant that there was no CDU-like party alternative to which American Christian voters could turn. Second, although many prominent religious leaders in the United States criticized Trump when he ran for the GOP nomination in 2016, America's highly diversified religious landscape meant that there were other religious leaders more than willing to legitimize his populist use of religion (p. 241). Trump's eventual popularity among evangelical voters also meant that evangelical leaders risked alienating their constituents if they vociferously criticized him (p. 245). American religious leaders, in short, did not create the same taboo around religious support for populism as did their European counterparts.

For Cremer, the electoral backbone for populist parties is found among secular white working-class voters (p. 253), which raises intriguing questions about the troika of religion, race, and social class in populist movements. Cremer argues that the populist right is a secular movement, but if one's worldview fulfills an essentially religious function, then this identity-based populism is a form of religion, albeit one inconsistent with my definition of Christianity and that of most religious elites. That religious leaders reject the populist use of religion only reinforces their assertion that elites are out of touch with the "real people." It would likely come as a surprise to many Trump supporters who self-identify as evangelical to be told that they are "Godless" and the various "prayers" offered at the Capitol by insurrectionists would hardly be out of place at most evangelical worship services. Christianity and religion, more generally, are always susceptible to political manipulation and to becoming captive to the cultural values around them.

Left unsaid in much of this very good book is the role of race in identity-based populist movements. It hardly seems accidental that Trump's electoral support is concentrated among *white* voters (including religious ones), rather than *Black* ones. How does Cremer's account of populism contrast the racialized politics in the United States with its French and German counterparts where race is a less central social category? Finally, has the identity-based

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592723003092 Published online by Cambridge University Press

cleavage he expertly describes superseded social class ones, as Cremer suggests, or does this new divide reinforce class divisions in subtle ways? Populist parties give inordinate attention to issues like immigration, national culture and identity, and Islamophobia. But their economic positions are often consistent with working-class concerns, such as the minimum wage, social safety nets, and fiscal support for families.

The Godless Crusade is an impressive achievement. Cremer offers a bold thesis about the secular nature of right-wing populism, makes effective use of his elite interviews, and provides a lucid and historically informed analysis of his case studies. The book helps make sense of the surprising development of populist movements across the Atlantic and of possible ways to limit their electoral appeal.

In many political democracies, the role of adjudicating religion–state disputes has increasingly fallen to the judiciary. In *Worldly Politics and Divine Institutions*, Nashon Perez analyzes court cases from the United Kingdom, the United States, and the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) to highlight what he calls two "entanglements" between religion and the state: ones "that involve the application of or disregard for nondiscrimination rules in religious associations that receive governmental funding" and those in "cases in which a government endorses religious symbols in public places" (p. 2). Perez provides a deft review of four court cases, a systematic and clear analysis of the issues raised in these two entanglements, and a helpful set of "prescriptive conclusions" (p. 21) for how democratic states can address the tensions inherent between religion and the state, at least in the judicial arena.

Perez rightly notes that entanglements between religion and the state, "often thought of as no more than a vice to be avoided" (p. 131), are instead a "consistent feature of modern democracies" (p. 139). Many European states fund faith-based schools, many others have religious education as part of the core curriculum in the public schools, and even the United States with its tradition of church–state separation relies extensively on religious organizations to provide a wide array of social welfare services. Short of overturning these well-established links between religion and the state (which is not practical, likely, or even preferable) the first entanglement is virtually unavoidable in a political democracy that is simultaneously committed to religious freedom and nondiscrimination (pp. 76–77). A commitment to religious liberty must include the right of religious associations to determine who is and who is not part of their organizations (p. 55); yet, does that imply that those organizations are immune from the democratic obligation to nondiscrimination on issues such as hiring of religion teachers in the public schools (*Martinez v. Spain)* or the admission criterion for state-funded Jewish schools (British Jewish Free School Case)?

In answer to that dilemma, Perez outlines a multi-pronged test that considers the centrality of the religious norm to the funded religious association, whether the discrimination is internal or external to the organization, the level of funding from the state, and whether the religious association seeking the immunity from the law is willing to internalize the cost of its discrimination (pp. 65–68). Perez acknowledges that his "solution" to the first entanglement is "complex," but that is because the hybrid nature of links between religion and the state necessarily "gives rise to complex solutions" (p. 135).

The question posed in the second political-religious entanglement is under what conditions the state may encourage and promote religious beliefs. The dilemma pits the wishes of the majority religion against a democratic commitment to the equal treatment of persons of all religions and of no religion. The cases he reviews concern the placement of a cross on public land (*American Legion v. American Humanist Association*) and the Italian government's policy mandating a crucifix in all public classrooms (*Lautsi v. Italy*). Although he concludes that governmental endorsement of religion is "undesirable and ill-advised" (p. 107), Perez nonetheless argues that the religious majoritarian approach is "within the legitimate contours of democratic politics" (p. 109). I am less persuaded by his argument on this second entanglement. Although the religious majority has a democratic right to act on its collective self-interest, states that legitimate a hegemonic position violate the rights of religious minorities and undermine the democratic commitment to equal treatment. If states opt to promote religious beliefs, the more democratic alternative is to do so for all religions, rather than just the religion of the majority.

Secularizing trends in United States, Israel, and much of Western Europe have intensified battles between secular and religious voices on the proper role of religion in a political democracy. As such, *Worldly Politics and Divine Institutions* is a valuable book that helps untangle the complexities of entangled church–state systems that are a "consistent feature of modern democracies" (p. 139). Perez offers an excellent summary of the difficulty of these religious-political entanglements and a framework for how best to address them.

Turning the table on Nietzsche's famous aphorism that God is dead, the case studies in the edited volume, *Beyond the Death of God*, explore the myriad ways that "religion matters" (p. 31) in global affairs. The book is comprehensive in its scope, covering diverse regions of the world (Europe, Asia, Africa, the Middle East), various religious traditions (Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, folk religions), and from different disciplinary perspectives (political science, history, religious studies, psychology). The common question driving the case studies is "how, where, why, and through which

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592723003092 Published online by Cambridge University Press

modalities does religion matter across different sociopolitical micro and macro contexts" (pp. 23–24). The editors conclude that the answer to that question is that "religion matters, and it matters increasingly, not decreasingly, to politics" (p. 24). Based on the many fine case studies in the book, it is hard to argue with this conclusion.

The book chapters successfully illuminate the remarkable diversity inherent on the subject of religion and politics. They cover topics as varied as the religious–secular divide in Israel, the politics of Islam in the Sahel, the link between religion and populism in Europe, the rise of Hindu nationalism in India, state regulation of syncretic religions in China, and the role of Buddhism in initiating violence in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka, to name a few. The editors rightly note that the value and the utility of the individual chapters "will primarily accrue to readers with an interest in the particular religion" (p. 37): readers will likely gravitate toward topics most relevant to their own interests.

A clear strength of the book is its comprehensiveness: there are few edited volumes on religion and politics that are as wide ranging as this one. A potential weakness, however, is that it does not systematically establish common theories to illuminate the various topics covered in the chapters. This is often the case for edited books like this one that tackle large and complex issues. Yet, except for the editors' nontrivial observation that religion still matters in politics, it is mostly left to the reader to consider how, why, and under what conditions religion remains socially and politically salient. Let me offer just a few general observations.

The chapters on Africa, the Middle East, and Asia are a helpful reminder that secularization theory was never a particularly good fit outside the global West. In many parts of the Islamic world, religious communities, instead of retreating from the world of politics, provided meaningful "alternative models to secular policies, governments, and state actions" (p. 153). The dominant religious traditions in Asia (Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, Hinduism) defy easy categorization in the secularist paradigm because they blur the lines between the sacred and the profane and are among the world's least politically and religiously organized traditions. The picture is more complex in Western Europe and Israel where secularization has clearly had a social and political impact. In these regions it appears that the political mobilization of religion is a response to secular trends.

These three books highlight the importance of moving beyond the tired secular–religious debate in the social sciences. Instead, each contributes to an emerging literature that recognizes a more complex world where secular and religious perspectives somewhat uncomfortably coexist.

The Scarce State: Inequality and Political Power in the Hinterland. By Noah L. Nathan. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2023. 310p. $120.00 cloth, $39.99 paper.

doi:10.1017/S1537592724000112

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Noah Nathan's new book rectifies the conflation of low state presence with low state impact, demonstrating how influential the state can be, even when it is characterized as having limited state capacity. The author uses a rich case study of northern Ghana to illustrate how the state has affected inequality and social institutions in the region, contributing to political violence, electoral dynasties, and clientelism. Nathan draws on an impressive methodological toolkit and deep case knowledge to advance his argument. *The Scarce State* makes a major contribution to the literature on the state and should also be read with great interest by scholars of traditional leadership, social institutions, and local politics.

The book advances a new theory to explain why state actions may have even greater effects on society when the state is scarce. This theory builds on a key conceptual innovation that should become part of the basic language of the literature on the state: *resource advantage.* The state's resource advantage is the degree to which it is the main provider of local public goods and private goods, relative to society. It determines the value of engaging with the state, such that the state's actions should be less transformative where there are alternative opportunities for individuals to access economic resources and local public goods, such as employment or education. This concept has clear applications to a range of other big questions in political science and political economy related to incumbency politics, rent-seeking, natural resource wealth, and conflict.

Nathan combines the high/low resource advantage variable with state presence/absence to introduce four types of subnational regions. The book's focus is on the state scarcity category in which state absence is combined with high state resource advantage: many rural hinterland regions fall into this category. The model anticipates that any given distributional action taken by the state should have a greater impact on society where the state has taken fewer other actions historically (state absence) and where populations are more dependent on the state for economic goods (relative advantage). A concluding chapter with shadow cases of southern Ghana, Philippines, and Peru draws out the implications of the theory in the three other types of subnational settings.

Chapters 4–8 of *The Scarce State* draw on the northern Ghana case to show how state actions transformed society and social institutions. Three types of state interventions are highlighted: the invention and recognition of chiefs, investments in schools, and new land tenure provisions in the 1979 constitution. A key set of comparisons

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592723003092 Published online by Cambridge University Press