



## Call for Book Reviews

### Religion and the State: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives

First submission due: 13th March 2016

Final version due: 10th April 2016

Length of reviews: 500-2,000 words  
(1-3 books)

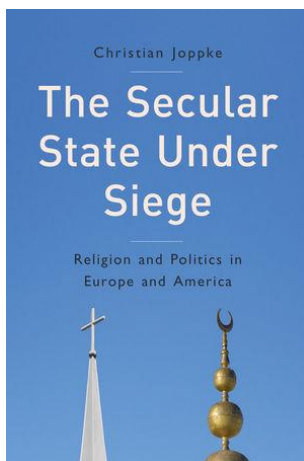
Contact: [stairbookreviews@gmail.com](mailto:stairbookreviews@gmail.com)

*Contemporary popular discourse on religion and the state tends to portray them in opposition to one another - for example, the challenge posed by “radical Islam” to Middle Eastern stability. However, religion’s role is and has historically been multidimensional and complex: it has been used to buttress the authority of the state, subvert it, and at times has inspired the formation of entirely new political entities. It can justify hierarchies within states and between them, as in the absolutist era in Europe, whilst at other times, states can be formed on explicitly anti-religious grounds, as in the Soviet Union.*

*Today, many Western governments are portrayed as wholly secular, which belies the fundamental ways in which religion has informed their development and outlook, and is often invoked to justify particular policy actions. Secularism is often associated with progress and modernity, but the historical record does not always confirm this.*

For this issue the journal suggests the following books for review. STAIR also welcomes other suggestions from eager reviewers, either within the theme of the issue or for the general section, related to current international affairs. For further details please contact us at [stairbookreviews@gmail.com](mailto:stairbookreviews@gmail.com).

***The Secular State under Siege: Religion and Politics in Europe and America.* Christian Joppke, 2015. Cambridge, UK: Polity.**

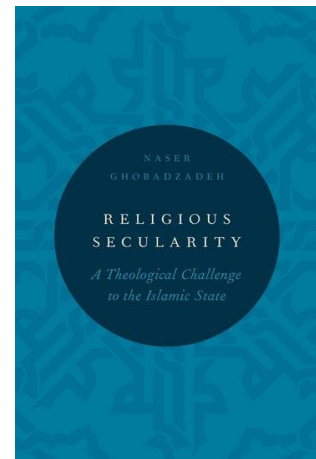


This book unravels the nature of the connection, disconnection, and attempted reconnection between religion and politics in the West. With respect to theory, it is argued that only a “substantive” concept of religion opens up the possibility of a historical-comparative perspective on religion. At the level of history, secularization is shown to be the distinct outcome of Latin Christianity itself. And at the level of comparative politics, the Christian Right in America which has attacked the “wall of separation” between religion and state and Islam in Europe with the controversial insistence on sharia law and other “illiberal” claims from some quarters are taken to be counterpart incarnations of public religion and challenges to the secular state.

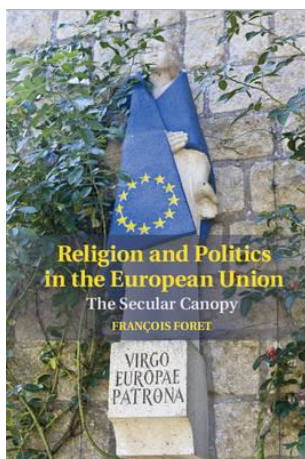
***Religious Secularity: A Theological Challenge to the Islamic State.* Naser Ghobadzadeh, 2015. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.**

*Religious Secularity* highlights the recent political developments that challenge the common perception that "fundamentalism" and "authoritarian secularism" are the two mutually exclusive paradigms available to Muslim majority countries. Naser Ghobadzadeh examines the case of Iran with his unique history regarding the relationship of religion and politics. He conceptualizes the politico-religious discourse in response to the Islamic state as "religious secularity," describing the Islamic quest for a democratic secular state.

Offering a new reading of Shiite political theology, Ghobadzadeh argues that the Islamic state is detrimental to religion while a secular state can be compatible with it. Going further, he contends that maintaining a secular government is crucial to the cultivation of genuine religious conviction.



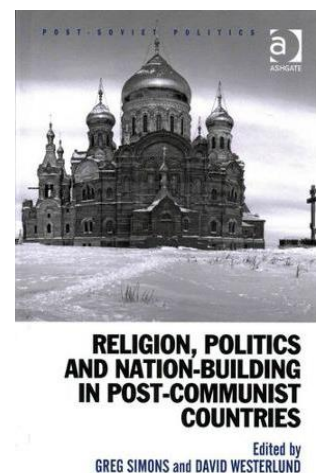
***Religion and Politics in the European Union: The Secular Canopy.* François Foret, 2015. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.**



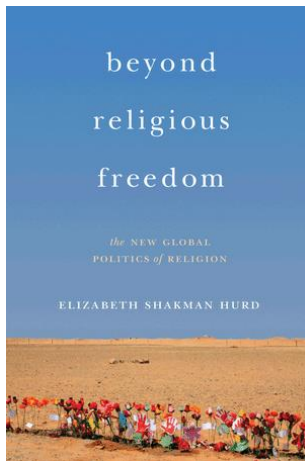
This book analyses the place and influence of religion in European politics. François Foret presents the first data ever collected on the religious beliefs of European decision makers and what they do with these beliefs. Discussing popular assumptions such as the return of religion, aggressive European secularism, and religious lobbying, Foret offers data and non-normative conceptual frameworks to clarify some major issues in the contemporary political debate.

***Religion, Politics and Nation-Building in Post-Communist Countries.* Greg Simons and David Westerlund (eds.), 2015. Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing.**

This edited volume gives a broad overview of the political importance of religion in the Post-Soviet space. Leading international scholars consider the religious and political role of Christian Orthodoxy in the Russian Federation, Romania, Georgia and Ukraine alongside the revival of old, indigenous religions, often referred to as 'shamanistic' and look at how, despite Islam's long history and many adherents in the south, Islamophobic attitudes have increasingly been added to traditional anti-Semitic, anti-Western or anti-liberal elements of Russian nationalism. Contrasts between the church's position in the post-communist nation building process of secular Estonia with its role in predominantly Catholic Poland are also explored.



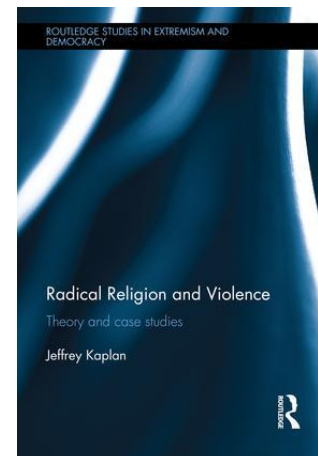
***Beyond Religious Freedom: The New Global Politics of Religion.* Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, 2015. Princeton, US: Princeton University Press.**



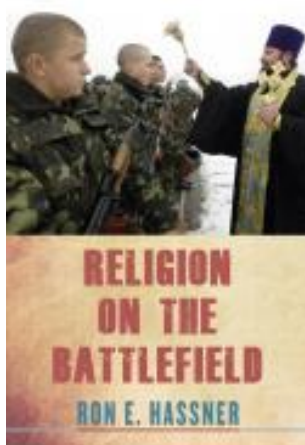
*Beyond Religious Freedom* is a forceful and timely critique of the politics of promoting religious freedom. Elizabeth Shakman Hurd looks at three critical channels of state-sponsored intervention: international religious freedom advocacy, development assistance and nation building, and international law. She shows how these initiatives make religious difference a matter of law, resulting in a divide that favours forms of religion authorized by those in power and excludes other ways of being and belonging. In exploring the dizzying power dynamics and blurred boundaries that characterize relations between "expert religion," "governed religion," and "lived religion," Hurd charts new territory in the study of religion in global politics.

***Radical Religion and Violence: Theory and Case Studies.* Jeffrey Kaplan, 2016. New York, US: Routledge.**

Jeffrey Kaplan has been one of the most influential scholars of new religious movements, extremism and terrorism. His pioneering use of interpretive fieldwork among radical and violent subcultures opened up new fields of scholarship and vastly increased our understanding of the beliefs and activities of extremists. This collection features many of his seminal contributions to the field alongside several new pieces which place his work within the context of the latest research developments. Combining discussion of the methodological issues alongside a broad array of case studies, this will be essential reading for all students and scholars of extremism, religion and politics and terrorism.



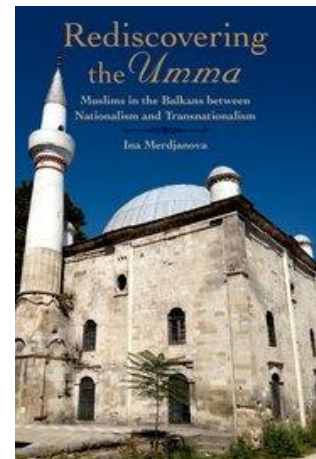
***Religion on the Battlefield.* Ron E. Hassner, 2016. Ithaca, US: Cornell University Press.**



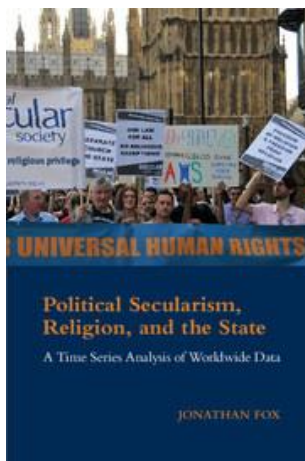
How does religion shape the modern battlefield? Ron E. Hassner proposes that religion acts as a force multiplier, both enabling and constraining military operations. In the last century, religion has influenced modern militaries in the timing of attacks, the selection of targets for assault, the zeal with which units execute their mission, and the ability of individual soldiers to face the challenge of war. Religious ideas have not provided the reasons why conventional militaries fight, but religious practices have influenced their ability to do so effectively. In *Religion on the Battlefield*, Hassner focuses on the everyday practice of religion in a military context: the prayers, rituals, fasts, and feasts of the religious practitioners who make up the bulk of the adversaries in, bystanders to, and observers of armed conflicts.

***Rediscovering the Umma: Muslims in the Balkans between Nationalism and Transnationalism.* Ina Merdjanova, 2013/ 2016. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.**

In *Rediscovering the Umma*, Ina Merdjanova discusses the conditions and role of Islam in relation to post-Ottoman nation-building, the communist period, and post-communist developments in the Balkans, focusing in particular on the remarkable transformations experienced by Muslim communities after the end of the Cold War. The rising political and cultural self-awareness of Muslims in Southeast Europe was frequently expressed by recourse to two frames of reference: the national and the transnational. Despite a certain level of tension between those two perspectives, they were closely intertwined. Moreover, transnational Islamic influences often reinforced Muslim ethnonational identities rather than prompting a radical redefinition of religious allegiances in the key of a "universalist" Islam.



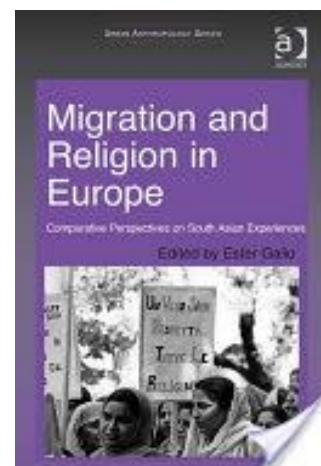
***Political Secularism, Religion, and the State: A Time Series Analysis of Worldwide Date.* Jonathan Fox, 2015. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.**



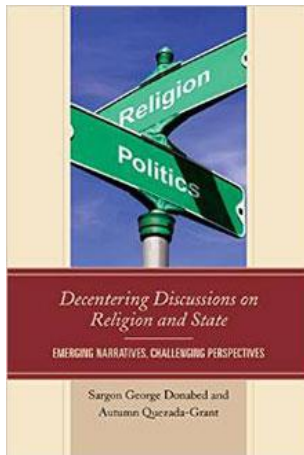
This book examines a hundred and eleven types of state religion policy in a hundred and seventy seven countries between 1990 and 2008. Fox argues that policy is largely a result of the competition between political secular actors and religious actors, both of which try to influence state religion policy. While there are other factors that influence state religion policy and both the secular and religious camps are divided, Fox offers that the secular-religious competition perspective provides critical insight into the nature of religious politics across the globe. While many states have both increased and decreased their involvement in religion, Fox demonstrates that states which have become more involved in religion are far more common.

***Migration and Religion in Europe: Comparative Perspectives on South Asian Experiences.* Ester Gallo (ed.), 2014. Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing.**

Religious practices and their transformation are crucial elements of migrants' identities and are increasingly politicized by national governments in the light of perceived threats to national identity. As new immigrant flows shape religious pluralism in Europe, longstanding relations between the State and Church are challenged. This volume explores the process of reformulating religious identities and practices amongst South Asian 'communities' in European contexts. Presenting ethnographies, including studies of Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism and Islam amongst migrant communities in contexts as diverse as Norway, Italy, the UK, France and Portugal, *Migration and Religion in Europe* sheds light on the meaning of religious practices to diasporic communities. It examines the manner in which such practices can be used to produce distance or proximity, as well as their political significance in various 'host' nations.



***Decentering Discussions on Religion and State: Emerging Narratives, Challenging Perspectives.* Sargon Donabed and Autumn Quezada-Grant, 2015. Lanham, US: Lexington Books.**

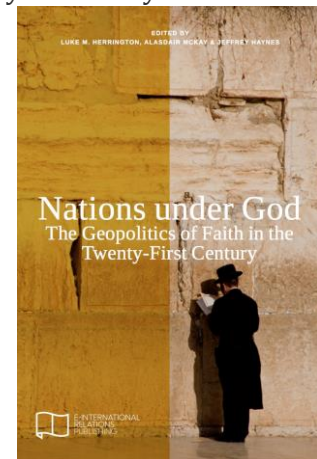


This volume explores conversations through history between individuals and communities over questions about religion and state. Divided into two sections, the authors begin with considerations on the separation of religion and state, as well as Roger Williams' concept of religious freedom. The first half examines voices in American History as they publicly engage with notions of secular ideology. Discussions then shift as the volume broadens to world perspectives on religion-state relations. Authors consider critical questions of nation, religious identity and transnational narratives. The intent is to privilege new narratives about religion-state relations. Decentering discussions away from national narratives allows for emerging voices at the individual and community levels.

***Nations under God: The Geopolitics of Faith in the Twenty-First Century.* Luke M. Herrington, Alasdair McKay, and Jeffrey Haynes (eds.), 2015. Bristol, UK: E-International Relations.**

*Nations under God: The Geopolitics of Faith in the Twenty-First Century* is a timely contribution to the ongoing discussion on religion and global politics. The volume brings together over thirty leading scholars from a variety of disciplines such as political science, IR theory, sociology, theology, anthropology, and geography.

Utilising case studies, empirical investigations, and theoretical examinations, this book focuses on the complex roles that religions play in world affairs. It seeks to move beyond the simplistic narratives and overly impassioned polemics which swamp the discourse on the subject in the media, on the internet, and in popular nonfiction by acting as a vessel for scholarly research on religion. The edited collection presents a balanced analysis of the multifaceted roles taken on by religions, and religious actors, in global politics.



***Religion in a Global Age: Critical Essays on Religion and International Relations.* Scott Thomas, 2016. New York, US: Routledge.**

This collection of seminal and provocative essays draws together writings on religion and globalization, conflict, development, and international relations theory. Thomas seeks to sculpt them into a new argument regarding religion, theology, politics, and international relations beginning to carve out a space for an interpretive approach to the study of religion and international relations. The essays focus on bringing religion back into the Theory of International Relations, the nexus between International Security and the Global Resurgence of Religion as well as the Catholic Church and the Study of International Relations. Arguing that more time needs to be spent considering who benefits from the way the religious turn in IR has been constructed and what is it supposed to accomplish, this work from a scholar at the forefront of the debate will be a valuable resource for students and scholars of religion & politics, theology, security studies and international relations.